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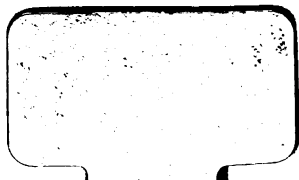
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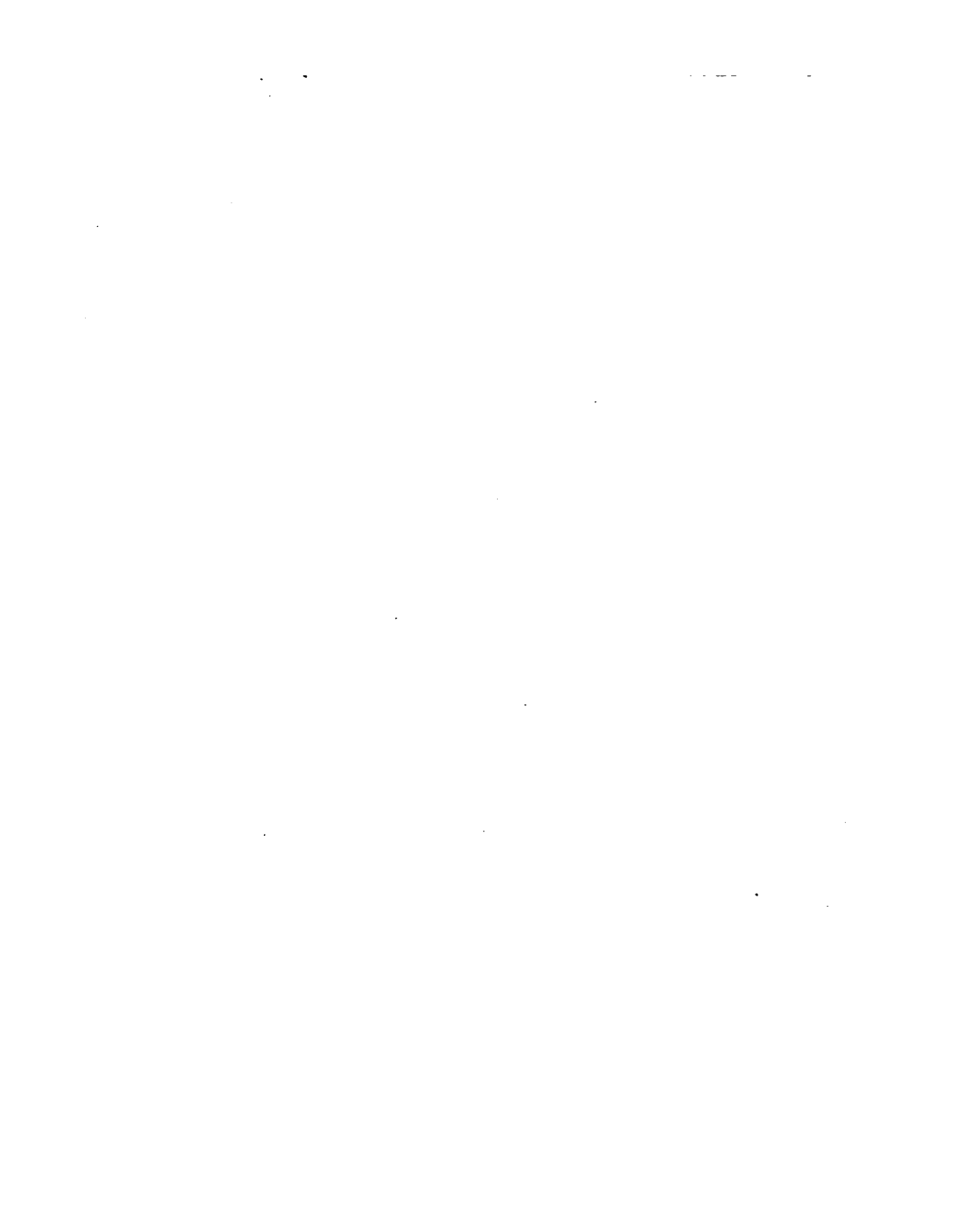
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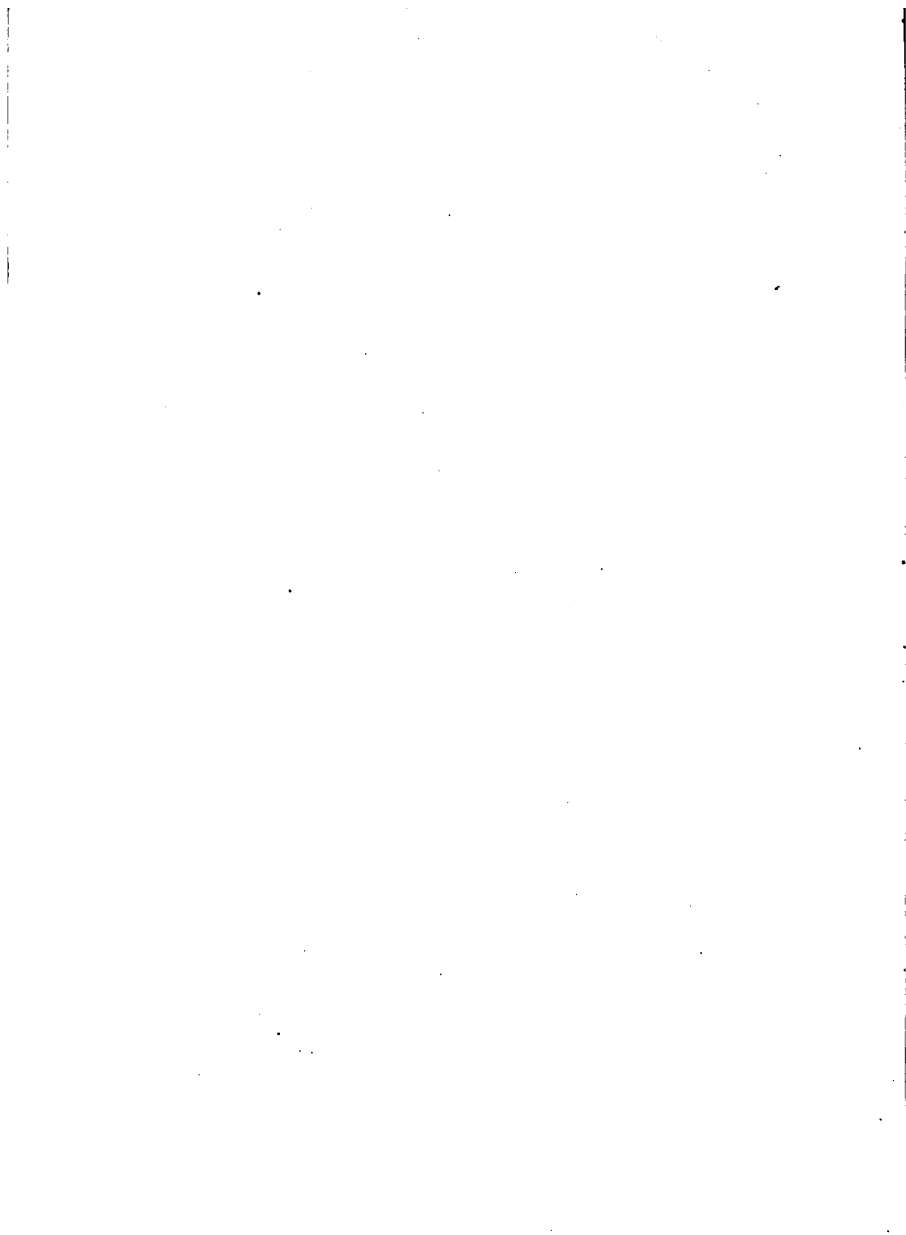


VISITS TO
BEECHWOOD
FARM

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The Mossy Bank.

VISITS
to
LEECHWOOD FARM
ON
COUNTRY PLEASURES
AND
HINTS FOR HAWKING

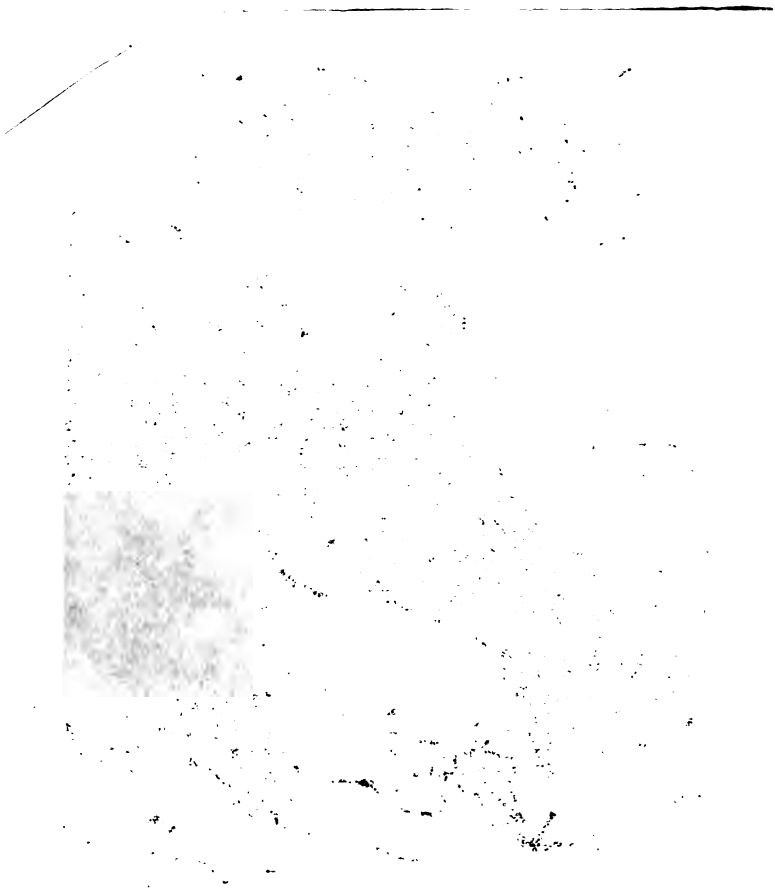
ADDRESSED TO THE YOUNG.

BY CATHARINE M. A. COOPER.

"A spontaneous friendship exists between Nature and the child. As soon as they meet, the child is at home. A poem is the child's spontaneous expression of feeling. The child's language is the language of Nature."—*Walden*.

Illustrated by John Abson.

LONDON:
GRANT AND GRIFFITH,
SUCCESSORS TO
J. HARRIS, CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,
M.DCCCXLVIII.



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The Mossy Bank.

VISITS
TO
BEECHWOOD FARM:
OR,
COUNTRY PLEASURES,
AND
HINTS FOR HAPPINESS.

ADDRESSED TO THE YOUNG.

BY CATHARINE M. A. COUPER.

"A spontaneous friendship exists between Nature and childhood. As soon as they meet, they are playmates. A green lane, a moss-covered rock, a blossoming tree—anything in Nature will delight the young."—R. C. WATERSTON.

Illustrated by John Absolon.

LONDON:
GRANT AND GRIFFITH,
SUCCESSORS TO
J. HARRIS, CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.
M.DCCC.XLVIII.



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PREFACE.

IN these days, when Children's Books are so abundant that they are read once and thrown aside for new ones, instead of being conned over and over again, until they are almost committed to memory, as was the case some fifty years ago, it seems necessary to give some reason for offering a new one to the favour of that interesting part of the "public," the boys and girls who will by and bye be the men and women to guide opinion, frame laws, and in their turn educate the young and ignorant.

The Writer of the following pages has often regretted to find, amongst a number, now rapidly increasing, of really valuable

and delightful books, some, written purposely for children, abounding in words and ideas far beyond their comprehension, and scenes and events seldom occurring in the life of a child.

In order to avoid both these errors, she has, whilst aiming at probability in every incident, endeavoured that each should bear its moral, not in that didactic style so offensive to children, but drawn out naturally by the young actors in the scene.

Having found this little story well-received by some of all ages, the Authoress has ventured to send it into the world, hoping it may find a place in many juvenile libraries, and wishing for nothing more than that it should be an "*oft read tale*."

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COUNTRY PLEASURES;

OR,

VISITS TO BEECHWOOD FARM.

SPRING.

Beautiful gems, that on the brow of earth
Are fix'd as in a queenly diadem,
Though lovely ye, and 'most without a name,
Young hearts rejoice to see your buds come forth,
As light, erewhile, into the world came.

ROBERT NICOLL.

“Good news, Caroline, *such* good news!”
said little Agnes Mitchell, as she bounded
into the room where her sister and her gover-
ness were at work together; “guess what it
is?”

"Papa is going to take us to the theatre, perhaps, or we are to have a dance this Easter?"

"No ; better, much better !"

"I do not see how it can be much better," said Caroline, peevishly, "but tell us at once, and do not be tiresome."

"Papa is going to take us to Beechwood Farm, and we are to go by the railway, and we are to have a week's holiday, and you are to go with us, dear Miss Horton, and—and—I am so happy," and the joyous child danced about the room. Her sister, however, did not seem to enjoy the prospect so much as she did, and instead of expressing any pleasure, said,

"I do not see anything so very delightful in it ; I remember once going there for a day or two when mamma was ill there, and it was dull ; there was nothing to do but to walk in the garden or the fields all day

long, and Aunt Jane is always very stupid, and grandmamma is very old. I wish we were not going ; we shall miss all the Easter dances !”

“ Oh ! but, Caroline, think of running about in the fields and gathering *real* primroses and cowslips ! and I’m sure Aunt Jane must be very good, or papa would not be so fond of her, and it’s because she’s so good and won’t leave grandmamma that she never comes to see us ; do you know Aunt Jane, Miss Horton ?”

“ Yes, my dear, she was my best friend, and I do not know anybody that is fonder of children, or does more to please them, and I have no doubt you will be very happy there. I am sure it will be a great treat to *me* to go into the country ; I am much obliged to your papa for thinking of me.”

“ Oh ! papa knew I should not be happy without you,” said Agnes ; “ besides, he said

he thought it would do you good, and bring a little colour into your pale cheeks," and the affectionate child kissed the cheek, the *very* pale cheek of her governess.

Caroline and Agnes were the only children of Mr. Mitchell, a rich shipbroker : they had lost their mother when Agnes was only two years old, and had been educated by Miss Horton a young person, who united a very sweet disposition and engaging qualities to a well cultivated mind. The girls were both very fond of her ; Agnes, who had hardly known a mother's care, could not bear to be separated from her ; Caroline was five years older than her sister, and having had her own way very much during her mother's illness, looked upon Miss Horton more as a governess than as a friend : she was now thirteen and Agnes eight.

They lived in a narrow street in London ; their school-room window looked upon high

walls, and they heard the constant din of carts and coaches: well might Agnes long to run in the fields, where she had never been since she could remember, and do what she had never done before, gather the "real primroses." Miss Horton had been brought up in the country, and during the six years of her confinement in the narrow, dark street, had found great pleasure in describing to Agnes the beauties of the country, its sights, its sounds, and its pleasant scents.

Caroline's tastes were more for the town, and a forced tulip pleased her better than the sweetest violets gathered on a mossy bank could have done. She was too fond of her father to show that she was disappointed in the prospect of this journey, but she prepared for it with far less pleasure than either of her companions.

It was a bright beautiful morning in the early part of April, when the party set out

by the railway for the market-town in Wiltshire, near which Beechwood Farm, the residence of old Mrs. Mitchell, was situated. Agnes had never been in a railway carriage before, and she sat very quietly with her hand in Miss Horton's, too much occupied with the novelty (and, perhaps, feeling a little afraid) to talk as much as usual. When they left the train, however, and got into Mrs. Mitchell's carriage, she made amends for her former silence by chattering away famously.

"Oh, what a pretty lane! is that near Beechwood? How I should like to go there! Oh! what beautiful flowers! what are they? Caroline do look at all those birds! Miss Horton look at all that moss on that bank! Papa, how far have we to go? I want to get there, but I like driving along these pretty lanes! Oh! look at that field, quite yellow; are those cowslips?" In this way

she ran on, never waiting for an answer, till they drove into a narrower lane, which Mr. Mitchell told her led to Beechwood Farm; she was then very quiet as they drove slowly along the rough road, and at last said, "Is grandmamma very deaf?"

"No, my dear," said her father, "not at all deaf, what should make you think she is?"

"I thought all old ladies were deaf, and very grave and severe."

"You will not find your grandmamma at all severe, love," said Miss Horton; "I was always very fond of her, and she was always trying to please me and make me happy when I used to be at Beechwood, when I was a child. I went there first when I was rather younger than you, and I was rather frightened lest I should never be allowed to laugh and play, but I soon found myself very merry and happy."

As she said this the carriage stopped at the gates leading to the farm, which were soon opened by a rosy, chubby boy, who touched his cap to the gentleman, and then running in, told his mammy that there were two such pretty little ladies in the carriage, and that one of them smiled at him, and gave him a penny.

At the door Miss Mitchell met them, and far from thinking Aunt Jane looked "stupid," as Caroline had said she was, little Agnes jumped out of the carriage, and put her arms round her neck, saying, "Oh! I am sure I shall love you very much, next to papa and Miss Horton."

Grandmamma was in the dining-room ready to receive them; she was an old lady of eighty-five, very thin and little, but though so old, she evidently had been very pretty. She wore her own hair, which was almost white, under a very plain cap, and looked altogether

more like a picture than anything Agnes had ever seen ; but she smiled so kindly at her, that the little girl did not feel much afraid, though she stood holding Miss Horton's hand, looking at her grandmamma, without venturing to speak.

It was now about five o'clock, and as they were very early at Beechwood, as soon as the travellers had taken off their bonnets, they sat down to tea ; this amused Agnes very much, for in London they always dined at that time, for Mr. Mitchell did not like to dine alone.

After tea Agnes seated herself on a little stool between Miss Horton and Aunt Jane ; she began talking about their journey, but soon was quiet, and then fell fast asleep with her head in her aunt's lap. Her papa carried her up to bed, and she was sleeping so soundly that she never wakened till six o'clock the next morning, when she was very

much puzzled at finding herself in a strange bed. She jumped up rather frightened at first, but seeing Miss Horton beside her, asked how she came there, and how it was she did not remember going to bed ?

“You went to sleep down stairs, dear, and papa carried you up to bed.”

“Oh dear me ! but wasn’t it very rude, and wasn’t grandmamma very angry ?”

“Not at all ; you were very tired with your journey, and all the new things you had seen, and grandmamma was not at all angry ; but now we will get up ; see how fine it is, we can have a walk before breakfast.”

Agnes jumped up and was soon dressed, but she could not persuade Caroline, who was sleeping in a little bed in the same room, to get up ; she said it was very early, and she must have another nap. Agnes ran down stairs when she was dressed, and played on the grass till Miss Horton was ready, and



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Agnes & Caroline

then they both went into a field near the house, and brought back a heap of primroses and daisies as large as Agnes could hold in both arms.

“Are they not beautiful, grandmamma?” said the little girl throwing the flowers on the floor, and sitting down by them to make them into nosegays.”

“Very beautiful, dear,” replied the old lady, as she smoothed the hair on the child’s open forehead ; “but where is Caroline this fine morning ? has she not been out with you ?”

“No, grandmamma, I don’t think she’s dressed, I’ll go and see ;” and Agnes ran off with a handful of flowers. She opened the door very softly, half hoping to find her sister asleep, which she did, and stepping on tip-toe to the bed, threw the primroses on her face to waken her, thinking, simple child, that every one must love flowers as she did. They answered the intended purpose, but Caroline

did not approve of such a mode of being roused, and, dissatisfied with herself for her indolence, she was, as is generally the case, cross to others.

“Oh, dear me, child! how very disagreeable you are, bringing those nasty wet things here, do take them away, you’ll be leaving grubs and all sorts of things crawling about. I wish you would leave me alone;” and Caroline pettishly turned away from her sister, who, quite surprised that she was not pleased, begged her pardon, and, gathering up her flowers, went down stairs again, where she found breakfast ready; and her walk having made her hungry, she very much enjoyed her bread and milk—real country milk, how different from the London milk she was used to!

When they had nearly done breakfast Caroline appeared, and her heavy eyes and pale face looked more like London than Beechwood.

"Are you ill, my dear?" asked her grandmother.

"No, grandmamma," said she, and she began to eat her breakfast very fast to avoid being noticed.

After breakfast all the party, except old Mrs. Mitchell, set out for a walk, Agnes asking and obtaining permission to carry a basket for her flowers. The weather for the season was remarkably mild, and the day felt more like a day in June than in the beginning of April. After having walked some distance, they turned into a lane with high banks on each side, which they had scarcely entered, when Agnes, stopping short, exclaimed, "Oh, how sweet! they must be violets! are they not, Aunt Jane? whereabouts are they?"

The aunt showed her where to look for them, and she threw herself on the bank to enjoy the delightful perfume.

"They're very sweet, to be sure," said Caroline, "but they are not particularly pretty; these are much prettier," and she turned to a group of hyacinths which were just by.

"Yes, those are more beautiful," said her aunt, "but I should prefer the violets, they smell so sweetly after they have faded."

When Agnes had enjoyed the violets for some time, and gathered several handsfull, she turned to the hyacinths, and breaking off their crisp stalks very quickly, asked if she might plant them in a bit of ground that her aunt had given her for a garden.

"They are very difficult to get up, you could not get them without a spade or fork."

"Oh! but I mean these, just what I have gathered."

"These would fade directly, dear; you had much better put them in water, they would not grow in the ground."

Agnes looked as if she did not understand, but her aunt turning to speak to Miss Horton, she was obliged to wait to have her curiosity satisfied ; and in the meantime filled her basket with primroses, hyacinths, and violets. On their road home, she walked very quietly, taking hold of her aunt's hand, till she had done talking, and then she said, "Aunt Jane, what makes plants grow?"

"What makes you grow?" was her aunt's reply.

"Me ! oh, eating food makes me grow !"

"Well, the plant grows from eating food."

"Oh, aunt, you must be laughing at me, the plant has no mouth nor teeth, how can it eat ? and it cannot go to fetch its food, and it has nobody to feed it."

"Very true, my dear, the plant has no mouth, it gets its food out of the ground ; it draws it up through its stalk, and though it cannot go and fetch its food, its food comes

to it, and garden plants very often have their food brought to them; I often feed my plants, and the gardener feeds some every day."

"Oh dear! aunt Jane, how puzzling you are, what *can* you mean by all this?"

"Did you not hear grandmamma say this morning to me, 'If you do not take care that rose will die for want of water?' Well, that is its food; if there were no wet in the ground, the plant could not get any food, and it would die."

"But that is only drinking, do they never eat? I should not like to live on water only."

"There is nourishment in the water, and as it passes through the earth it gets nourishment from it, and feeds the plant; perhaps you will be still more surprised to hear that the plant has a sort of blood that circulates through it."

"How very curious. Miss Horton was tell-

ing me a little while since about the circulation of my blood, and how it goes out of the heart, and comes into it again, after having gone all about the body ; but what is the blood of plants ? it is not red, and they have no room for a heart."

"Their blood is called *sap*, my dear ; but though plants have no heart, this sap flows through all the little branches ; the blood of plants has little or no colour."

"How very wonderful all this is, Aunt Jane, I must tell Caroline all about it ; I wonder whether Miss Horton knows it ?" and the eager little girl ran to let others share in her pleasure ; she did not find Caroline, however, particularly interested in what she had to communicate. Miss Horton knew it all before, but she kindly entered into Agnes' pleasure, and was interested in all she had to tell her. It was this interest, ever awake and ever ready, that endeared Miss Horton to

Agnes. Everything that interested the child interested her ; there was not a joy or a sorrow that Agnes brought to her kind friend that did not receive sympathy ; she was young enough to remember when she was herself a child, and therefore fully entered into all the feelings of Agnes, who, finding her sympathy and kindness so delightful in contrast with the selfishness of Caroline, made her much more of a companion, and even a playfellow.

On their return from their walk, they went round the garden, where the gardener was very busy. Agnes stayed behind to watch him, but soon ran after her aunt and said, " Aunt Jane, what is the gardener doing, putting little things that look like shot and dust and bits of straw into the ground, and covering them up, and marking where he has put them with bits of stick ? What good will they come to ? "

Miss Horton and her aunt were busy talking at the time she overtook them, but Caroline, hearing her questions, answered her, "How stupid you are, child, they are seeds to be sure."

"But what comes of them?"

"Plants and flowers."

"But how do they grow, and where do the seeds come from? and how do the violets come that I have been gathering? for the gardener did not go into the lanes to sow those seeds! and did those beautiful hyacinths come from seeds?"

Now Caroline could not answer half these questions, but, instead of saying so, and waiting till Miss Mitchell was at liberty, she said very crossly, "Dear me! how can you expect to have so many questions answered all at once? Miss Horton spoils you with letting you ask so much, you had better ask her all about it."

Agnes was very impatient to have her mind satisfied on these points, so, as soon as ever the ladies ceased talking, the eager child called her aunt's attention. "Oh! do tell me all about the seeds!"

"It is a long story about the seeds, dear, and here we are at home; I shall be busy till dinner-time, and grandmamma wants you to help her to sort her wools for her knitting, so we must put off talking about the seeds till afternoon." And Agnes, happy in the possession of a very sweet temper, ran away to take her bonnet off, and returning in a few minutes was as happy, helping grandmamma, as if she had no wish ungratified.

• Dinner came sooner than Agnes, busy as she was, expected, but not sooner than she was ready for it, for her walk had given her a famous appetite. After dinner she looked wistfully at her aunt, anxious to hear about the seeds, but not liking to be troublesome.

Miss Mitchell, never forgetting what would give other people pleasure, smiled and said, "I have to make some calls in the village, are you disposed to accompany me, Miss Horton? or has your morning walk been enough for your *town* strength?"

"Oh! far from it; when I once get into the country, I feel as if I could never have too much walking."

The ladies rose to get ready, and satisfied Agnes' beseeching look by telling both the children to put their bonnets on. Agnes was ready in five minutes; not so Caroline, who carried her morning indolence through the day. Miss Horton apologised to Miss Mitchell for her pupil's slowness, and said how much pains she had taken to cure her of it. Aunt Jane replied that no habit was more difficult to break, that she had herself when a girl been very dilatory, and that she never cured herself till she was fully con-

vinced how much valuable time she lost. Whilst they were talking Caroline appeared, and they set out.

Their road lay through a different lane from that which they had walked in before, but not less beautiful.

“Now, my dear child,” said Aunt Jane to Agnes, “what do you want to know about seeds?”

“First of all, as I suppose I am to ask only one question at a time, as Miss Horton often tells me, how do those odd-looking little things that I saw the gardener put into the ground this morning get into plants?”

“If you were to take one of them out of the ground some little time after it had been sown, you would see the shell or outside skin of the seed burst in two places, and a little white shoot coming out at each, one at the top, the other at the bottom : now the little shoot at the bottom grows till it becomes the

root, which feeds the plants, and the little shoot at the top grows up into the air, and becomes the stalk and leaves."

"Thank you, aunt ; and now, where do the seeds come from ?"

"When the flowers fade, you see little cases on the top of the stalk, which grow larger and larger, in flowers round like the poppy, in others long like the stock, and a variety of other shapes, and in these cases are the seeds."

"And how do the wild flowers come ? nobody surely takes the trouble of getting and sowing all that seed."

"No, dear, they sow themselves,—that is, when the seeds are ripe, fit to begin to grow, these cases burst open, and the seeds are scattered, and sometimes when there is a high wind it blows them about, and so from one little root many plants come up all about."

“ Oh, how very beautiful ! ” exclaimed Agnes.

“ It is indeed beautiful, dear child,” replied her aunt, “ to mark the care which Almighty Wisdom takes of all that He has created, not forgetting to provide for the growth of the little weed. It is more beautiful to me,” she continued, turning to Miss Horton, “ to watch the growth of a plant with all its delicate structure from a little seed than to mark the path of the heavenly bodies ; their grandeur seems to overwhelm me ; I feel when gazing at them as if thrown at a distance from their Maker, but the examination of some of His smaller, though no less perfect works, draws me nearer to Him who cares for the growth of the lily of the field, and supplies with nourishment the smallest moss.”

“ It is so with me,” replied her friend, “ when I am in any trouble, but there are times when I find more delight in the contemplation of the grandeur of creation as

displayed in the heavenly bodies, than in the exquisite minute structure of a plant ; but truly we find beauty all around us, and sadly deficient must that mind be in religious feeling which can look long without finding it."

Miss Mitchell here interrupted her friend by stopping at a cottage door, where a girl of about thirteen was sweeping the step, and two little boys of five and seven were sitting on low stools learning their spelling.

Miss Mitchell's "Good afternoon, Mary," made the girl turn round, and curtsying she asked the ladies to step in ; the little room was beautifully neat, the hearth nicely sanded, the fire bright, and the kettle boiling ; the round table was drawn near the window, and it was evident that Mary was just finishing her arrangements for the afternoon.

"Willie was just talking about you, Miss Mitchell," said Mary, who followed them into the room.

“Oh, Miss Mitchell ! is that you ?” asked a feeble voice, which came from a boy about ten years of age, who, propped up with pillows, was sitting in an arm-chair by the fire, his bright eye, pale cheek, and quick-drawn breath telling too plainly that he was in the last stage of consumption. He stretched out both his hands to Miss Mitchell, who, kindly pressing them, answered his look of inquiry, for he did not speak, by saying, “This lady is a friend of mine from London ; that great London you used to wish to go to.” Willie’s placid smile showed that wish was past, and had left no painful feeling of disappointment, and taking Miss Horton’s hand, he said, “I shall soon see a brighter place, but our little Harry would like to hear about London.”

Miss Horton turned to satisfy the longing looks of Harry, the eldest of the two at the door, who had both put by their books on the arrival of the visitors, whilst Willie, in a tone

of voice hardly above a whisper, told Miss Mitchell how much weaker he had been, and that he thought he should not live many days ; but not dwelling long on his own illness, he spoke with gratitude of his sister Mary's attention. "I am so afraid of her hurting herself lifting me from the bed to this chair,—for I am not ready to move when my father goes, and I cannot help myself much ;—I am not very heavy to be sure," he added, smiling as he looked at his thin hands and slight figure ; "but she is very young, and then her broken sleep with my coughing, for she will have me in her room that she may be sure to hear if I want anything ; but her care will soon be over, and the blessing of her dying brother will be sweet to think of when I am at rest."

He said these words with the composure of one to whom the thought of death had no horrors, yet when well he had enjoyed life as

much as any child. His mother had died when little Charles was born, and when he was five years old ; and from that time his sister Mary, though only three years older, had been as a mother to him, she had never forgotten her mother's dying injunction to watch over her boys. The baby went for two years to its grandmother, and then did this child of ten years old most religiously obey her mother ; she made a comfortable home for her father, when he was at home, which was only at his meals ; and from six o'clock in the morning to nine at night, nursed her eldest brother whose health was even then failing, and taught the younger ones till they went to school.

Willie was still talking with affectionate warmth of his sister, when she re-entered and began to set the tea-things, saying as she did it, " You will not think it rude in me to do this, for you know my father has only a

short time for his tea, and I am sure by his eyes dear Willie wants his."

Miss Mitchell assured her that no apology was necessary, and after a little conversation with Mary, and promising to send Willie some jelly, they took their leave. "Now, my dear Miss Horton," said Miss Mitchell, as they turned homewards, "what think you of what we have seen this afternoon?"

"I think," replied her friend, "that I never before saw in greater perfection in such young people, the beauty of active service and patient suffering."

"Beauty and beautiful!" whispered Caroline to her sister, as they walked behind, "I cannot think what they mean by using these odd words! I have often heard talk of a *beautiful* day, and a *beautiful* flower, a *beautiful* girl, and even a *beautiful* song, but what they can mean when they talk as they did as we came of a *beautiful* seed (a little ugly brown thing

like a bit of dirt !) and now of beauty in these two children, one so old-fashioned looking one could fancy she had got her grandmother's head, and put it on her own shoulders, the other so thin that you can almost see the bones coming out of the skin, I cannot think."

"Oh, Caroline !" said Agnes, earnestly, for child as she was she had a fine appreciation of the good and the beautiful, "is not everything beautiful that we like to look at and listen to, and do we not like to watch that little seed sprouting, and the tiny plant coming out of it ; and do we not like to watch that poor boy, smiling and looking so happy in spite of his pain, and loving his sister so much, and bearing his trouble so patiently, and to see her working for him and for all of them so busily, and never saying she is tired (I am sure neither of us could do so much) ; oh ! yes, Caroline, I am sure it is very beautiful !"

“Oh ! I dare say it is all very fine,” said Caroline, pettishly, for she was vexed at being told, what was nevertheless quite true, that she would not do as much ; “but I do not think it is so very wonderful what Mary does, she has been brought up to it, and is used to it.”

“My dear Caroline,” said her aunt, turning back on hearing this conversation, “it is true she has been brought up to it, but it has been very much her own training ; it has been her heart full of love that has kept her cheerful through much trouble, and made her work on, spite of the discouragement of almost constant grumbling from her father when at home, and of her little brothers being often very naughty.”

“Aunt Jane,” said little Agnes in a low voice, “don’t you think it would help her if she thought about Jesus Christ, for Miss Horton has often told me that he could never have done so much if he had not loved God and all the world so well.”

“It is no new thought to Mary, dear child ; she has often told me what a help it has been to her when she has tried to think how patiently Jesus bore his trials, and how he worked on and loved on through them all.”

Agnes made no reply, but walked on thoughtfully, holding her aunt's hand, till they arrived at the next cottage. They called at several on their way home, and found points of interest in all, and when they reached the Farm again, Agnes sat at her grandmamma's feet, and told her all they had seen and heard.

Thus passed their first happy day in the country, the rest of the days of their week's stay were as happy, though from some of them being rainy, they were not all spent in the same manner. Mr. Mitchell had not been able to spare all the time from business, but he came to take them home, and was glad to find his little girls quite rosy ; and

even Miss Horton, pale as she ever was, with a brighter eye and lighter step. Caroline was glad to go home, because she was very dull in the country, — Agnes was sorry to leave the green fields and pretty lanes, but she was of too happy a disposition to grumble, and she loved her papa and Miss Horton so well, that she was glad to go wherever they were. Their grandmamma and aunt were sorry to part from them, but looked forward to seeing them again in the summer.

Agnes was rather silent during the first part of their journey, but she soon recovered her spirits, and began chattering of all she had seen during her country visit, which she said seemed to have lasted a month, though she was so happy ; and as they came nearer to London, whilst Caroline's thoughts were running upon whether they should go to many dances, and whether they had missed any by being away, and what presents she should

have on her birthday, which was the week after, Agnes was talking of her pets, which she had left in the housemaid's charge.

“Miss Horton, do you think ‘dicky’ will know me again? I wonder whether Lucy remembered his lump of sugar, and to deck his cage? and I wonder whether all my rabbits are alive? and whether they are as big as grandmamma’s? But grandmamma’s rabbits like to run about on the grass-plot, but mine have no grass-plot to play in, and, oh! Miss Horton,—papa, I *do* like Beechwood *so much*, and I am so glad that we are going again in the Summer!”

SUMMER.

Child of the sun, refulgent Summer, comes
In pride of youth, and felt through Nature's depth :
He comes, attended by the sultry hours,
And ever-fanning breezes on his way.

• THOMSON.

SUMMER came : and one bright July morning Miss Horton was with her two pupils in their school-room ; the window was open to admit all the air that could be got in such a close situation ; the sofa was drawn close up to it, and Agnes was lying on it, her little face almost as pale as the white frock she wore, and her thin hand resting on Miss Horton's. She was recovering from a long illness, and was gaining strength very slowly. They

were sitting quite silent, when the door opened, and Mr. Mitchell came in ; he looked anxiously at the sofa, and kissing his little girl's forehead, said, "What do you think would bring the roses into these pale cheeks, Miss Horton?"

"Beechwood, dear papa ; nothing but Beechwood," whispered Agnes.

"Could you bear the journey, love, think you?"

"Oh ! yes, indeed I could, if I may go," said the child, and the excitement and pleasure of the idea brought a shade of colour into her pale face. "May I go, papa ? oh ! do let me !"

"Well, love," answered her father, "I have been planning it this morning ; if your doctor says you may go you shall."

"Oh, thank you ! thank you ! and Miss Horton and Caroline?"

"Miss Horton—yes, Caroline—no !" was

the reply. "Aunt Sophia will be here, and Caroline will stay at home with her."

At this decision Caroline's countenance brightened, for she was beginning to dislike the idea of going to Beechwood, for, hot as it was in London, she preferred the Parks to the green lanes of Beechwood, and she knew that Aunt Sophia, an unmarried sister of her mother's, was a very gay lady, who drove about in her carriage, and was very fond of having parties, and dressing gaily.

Agnes' pleasure was as great, and she seemed better already with the prospect before her of so soon breathing the pure country air, and she lay on her sofa quietly and happily, watching Miss Horton (who was as happy as she) preparing for their journey, for the medical man had at once decided that change of air was the best thing for his little patient. They were to go in an open carriage, as it was such fine weather, so that if Agnes

were too much tired they might rest on the road. She went to bed early, and after a better night than any she had had for some time, woke quite happy at the pleasant prospect before her.

At ten o'clock the carriage came to the door, and the little invalid being comfortably settled in it with plenty of pillows, they set off. As Mr. Mitchell foresaw, Agnes, though so very happy and so anxious to arrive at her journey's end, grew very languid when they came near Basingstoke, and she could not help acknowledging that she was very tired. Her papa, therefore, settled to stay there for the night, and next day, having resumed their journey quite refreshed, they arrived at Beechwood about five o'clock in the afternoon. Grandmamma and Aunt Jane were at the gate ready to receive them, and shook their heads to see their little favourite looking so ill, and Miss Horton, from her anxiety and nursing, almost as pale.

“Never mind, aunty,” said Agnes, “I shall soon get the roses back again in this dear place. How everything is grown!” added she as they came through the garden, which was full of roses in full bloom; “you will soon see my cheeks that colour,” and she laughingly gathered a bright bud which hung over the doorway.

Happy as the little girl was in coming again to her favourite spot, she was glad of the rest of her bed, and promising to get well very fast indeed, she soon fell asleep.

Next morning as she was sitting by the open window enjoying the soft breeze, which brought the sweet smell of roses, pinks, and sweet-peas, she asked her aunt how Mary Newton was.

“Alas! my dear,” replied her aunt, “I have but a sad story to tell you—”

“What, is poor Willie dead?” interrupted Agnes.

“My story has more of sadness in it than

that, my love, for Willie's best friends could not wish such a life of suffering to be prolonged. Willie did not live above a fortnight after you saw him, but in her constant and unwearied attendance upon him, Mary had strained her back, and having neglected it, that Willie might not suffer the loss of any of his usual comforts, when she did attend to it after his death, it was so bad that the medical men could find no remedy for it, and she is now confined to her bed, unable to move her lower limbs. To so active a spirit as hers, this is a far greater trial than harder work would have been, but Willie's example of patient suffering has not been thrown away upon her, and the heroine in action as you saw her, has become what is far rarer, a heroine in suffering. It is an instructive lesson to watch her hands constantly employed, and her eye ever on what is going on around her."

"But what has become of her little brothers?" asked Agnes.

"An aunt has come to live with them, who is an active, kind-hearted woman, but she does not possess Mary's orderly habits, and many a sorrowful look does the poor girl give around the room that used to be so neat : but such is the influence of real goodness, that, young as she is, Mary's gentle, well-timed hints have produced a considerable change in her aunt's habits."

"You must take me to see her when I can walk as far," said Agnes.

"I will, dear, she will be very glad to renew her acquaintance with you ; I was telling her the other day how ill you had been, and she was very much concerned."

The country air did the little invalid so much good, that, sooner than she expected, she was able to walk about. Her first walk beyond the garden was into the "violet lane,"

as she called the first lane she had been into when they came to Beechwood in the Spring. Miss Horton was with them, and they sat down to rest on a beautiful bank, now not covered with violets, but with a rich soft bed of moss. The hollow trunk of an old tree was near them, and after Agnes had been watching it for some time in silence, she suddenly exclaimed, "Aunt, what is that curious thing hanging in there?"

Her aunt examined the object of her curiosity, and told her that it was a wasp's nest, that it was made of something very like paper, which the wasp made from little chips of wood, which she worked up in her jaws till it was quite soft like paste, and then when it was made into the nest it hardened into a sort of pasteboard. She also told her, that there were a great many cells in the nest where the eggs were laid.

By the time Agnes was satisfied on this

subject they were rested, and pursued their walk, and going straight across a field into another lane, soon arrived at Newton's cottage.

Miss Mitchell's rap was answered by one of the little boys, and when they went in they found Mrs. Croft, Mary's aunt, preparing dinner ; she curtsied to them, and begged them to walk into the inner-room where Mary was.

"Her room is always neat, for she gets the little boys to put things tidy when I have made up her bed, and as for herself you never see a hair out of place ; I'm sure I don't know what would have become of the house, and the little ones, after my poor sister died, if it had not been for Mary, — but I am keeping you from her, ladies, and she will hear your voices, and be wanting to see you."

The ladies now proceeded to Mary's room,

where they found her propped up with pillows, and looking pale and ill, but perfectly neat and clean, and, as her aunt had said, without a hair out of place. She was employed in knitting, and a book lay open beside her; she smiled when they entered, and the little boy who was with her having set chairs, left them with the young invalid. She spoke cheerfully of herself, though it was evident there was no hope of her recovery. She said that her chief amusement was learning poetry when she was knitting; and then, when she was kept awake in the night by pain, she had a constant resource, but she did not dwell upon her own pains and troubles, but began to talk on other subjects, and was interested in hearing of Agnes' illness.

They stayed about half an hour with her: and on their way home Agnes eagerly inquired what she could give to Mary.

“I think, my dear,” said her aunt, “that the most acceptable present you could make her would be some books, particularly poetry books.”

“But, aunt, I have only half-a-crown, and that would buy so little.”

“Have you not some of your books here that you could spare? Mary would value them the more from their having been favourites of yours ; and if you wished to give her a new one, the half-crown would purchase a very nice one.”

With this object before her, Agnes was eager to reach home, too eager to think of sitting down to rest. Her friends did not restrain her in her eagerness to give pleasure ; and the moment she arrived at Beechwood, she spread her books before her on the table, to choose which she could spare. But it was no easy matter to do, for she had only brought her favourites with her,—and

it is no little trial to part with favourite books.

“Here’s the ‘Love Token’—not that; then there’s ‘Fidèle’—dear Fidèle—Miss Horton, shall we not miss Fidèle? but then Mary would like to read about little blind Bessie—yes, she must have that: and then there are ‘Sandford and Merton,’ and ‘Hymns for Infant Minds,’ I don’t much care for them, she may have those! ‘The Little Magazine,’—I cannot spare that, nor the ‘Deformed Boy.’ I’ll give her ‘Look Forward,’ I’m almost tired of that! Will these do, aunt?”

“It seems to me, dear, that except ‘Fidèle,’ you have chosen to give her what you like least yourself; now the ‘Little Magazine’ would be particularly nice for her, because it has many pretty pieces of poetry in it, and these she very much values,—can you not spare her that too, dear?”

There was a little struggle in Agnes' mind, but she was generous, and gave up her favourite book without making any objection ; and when next morning she took the books, she was amply rewarded for any sacrifice she had made, by seeing Mary's delight as these new treasures were spread before her, and particularly with what pleasure she took up the Little Magazine,—for she had seen one odd number, and had wished ever since to have some more.

A week passed away, in which Agnes gained more strength than her friends had ventured to hope, and the colour came again to her cheeks. At the end of that time she received a letter from Caroline, which she soon answered. Both the letters shew so completely in what each sister was interested and occupied, that we will present them to our young readers.

London, July 13th.

“MY DEAR AGNES,

“Aunt has a bad head-ache this morning, and cannot take her usual drive, and as I cannot practise for fear of disturbing her, and do not know what else to do, I will write a letter to you. I hope you are much better, and that you are enjoying yourself as much as I am, though that is hardly likely. We go a drive every morning, generally in one of the Parks, and we see a great many very gay people. The day after you went, Clara Grey came to ask me to go in there in the evening, and we had a little dance; she did not say anything about it, but, luckily, I had on my white frock with short sleeves, so it was all quite right. The next night aunt had her whist party at home, and Mrs. Clarke brought Emma with her to visit me. She was *such* a figure, poor child! with that odd, old-fashioned silk frock, that must have been

her grandmother's ; and with long sleeves ! only think ! *I* had on my pink frock, which aunt says suits me better than anything else. Next day was Sunday : we went to church in the morning ; you know aunt always likes to go to that church nearest us, because, she says, she sees so many of her friends there. We had a long drive in the Park in the afternoon, and several people came to call. Miss Mortimer and her brother came in to tea, and they stayed all the evening. On Monday I had a little party here, and aunt said I was dressed better than anybody. But, was it not provoking, James Osborn threw a cup of coffee over my frock, and I could have worn it twice more, and muslin never looks so well when it has been washed ! Yesterday (Tuesday) my aunt had her whist party again ; but nobody came to see *me*, so I read some story books all the evening.

“Give my love to Miss Horton, and tell her I have not written any of the French she left for me to do, but I will try to do some before she comes back. Give my love to papa, grandmamma and aunt, and believe me,

“Your affectionate sister,

“CAROLINE MITCHELL.”

In a few days after having received this letter, Agnes sat down to answer it, and having had her lines ruled, and her pen mended by Miss Horton, she began the following letter :—

“Beechwood Farm, July 18th.

“MY DEAR CAROLINE,

“I am glad to hear that you are enjoying yourself so much, but I am sure you cannot be happier than I am, and I am getting so strong, and quite rosy and fat,

papa says. We go long walks every evening, because it is too hot to walk in the middle of the day; so in the morning we sit in the summer-house, and aunt or Miss Horton reads to us, whilst grandmamma knits and I work; and very often aunt tells us about curious insects, and the nests they make; and, oh! Caroline, do you know, there is a spider that makes a house with a door to it, and the door has hinges, and it shuts the door when it goes into the house? and do you know about the beetle, that buries things in the earth a great deal bigger than itself, and then lays its eggs in their bodies, and the little grubs that come out of the eggs eat the dead bodies? and the caterpillar of the moth, that Miss Horton tries to keep away from our fur tippets by putting camphor in, makes a little coat for itself of cloth, and sometimes the coat is of several colours; and, oh! I

cannot tell you a quarter of what aunt tells us, but she has given me a nice little book, with a great deal about insects and animals, that have tools like men : it is called 'Uncle Philip's Conversations !'

" And then, sometimes we go and see poor Mary Newton, who can never get up, because she hurt her back, and I take flowers for her, and sometimes a new book, for she is very fond of reading, and she talks so nicely, and sometimes says pieces of poetry to us. I always feel better when I have been to see her, and feel so sorry I was not so patient when I was ill.

" But I must finish this long letter, for the tea-things are coming in. Grandmamma, papa, and aunt Jane send their love to you ; and I remain

" Your affectionate sister,

" AGNES MITCHELL."

It requires but little thought to discover which of these two children was happier now, or likely to become the happier woman, the one whose thoughts were all of self, or the one whose heart was open to feelings for others, and who was always ready to admire the beauties she saw around her ; from admiring the works of God, she would learn to love Him who made everything so beautiful ; and sincere love will ever lead to obedience to His will.

Day after day thus passed happily over Agnes' head ; she was gaining health and strength, and, under the influence of her aunt's example, was becoming daily more thoughtful and considerate for others, without losing any of her joyous spirits. Her aunt taught her every night to look back upon the day she had passed, and never to rest satisfied with herself if she had not on that day done something to make another per-

son happier, or if she had neglected any opportunity of doing so.

One night, when her aunt came as usual to kiss her when she was in bed, she whispered to her, "It has not been a *good day*, dear aunt !"

"Has it not, love? I have been watching you all day, and I have seen you trying to make every body about you happy ; it seemed to me that you were peculiarly watchful to please grandmamma."

"Ay, so I was after, to try to make up, but when I went to take that jelly, directly after breakfast, to old Nanny Wilson, little Kittie had got her knitting wrong, and I told her I could not stop to do it then, for I was in a hurry ; now, I had no need to be in a hurry, for it was only to finish that story I was reading ; I have been trying to make it up all day, but I am not satisfied ; will it do better, auntie, if I go to-morrow, and do several rows while she gets old Nanny's dinner ready,

and if I read to Nanny instead of hearing you tell about the insects?"

Her aunt told her she thought it would be a very good plan, and, kissing her fondly, left her to go to sleep, which the child, happy in having confessed her neglect, and planned a voluntary punishment, was not long in doing.

As the time drew near that was originally fixed for Mr. Mitchell and his little girl returning to London, Agnes began to feel very sorry to think of leaving beautiful Beechwood. Several times, when she went into the parlour, she found her aunt and papa talking very earnestly together, and they always stopped when she went in; she wondered at first what it could be about, but she soon thought, that if she were likely to be interested in it, they would tell her the subject of their conversations. One day, however, she went in, and found her grandmamma, papa, and aunt, and Miss Horton together,

busily talking, with an open letter before them. Mr. Mitchell called her to him, and said, taking her on his knee, "Well, my little Agnes, shall you be very glad to go back to gay, busy London?"

Agnes looked rather grave, and answered, "I shall always like to be with you and Miss Horton, papa, but I shall be *very very* sorry to leave dear auntie, and Beechwood, and grand-mamma, and everybody here,—and I am not at all fond of London; things look so dark and dirty there to what they do here: but when are we going, papa?"

"To-morrow, dear." Agnes looked very much surprised.—"But what will you say when I tell you that we are coming back again in a few weeks to live here?"

Agnes' delight was quite evident; she jumped from her papa's knee, and danced about, and said, over and over again, how happy she was. But when she was a little

quieter, she suddenly said, "But this little house will not hold us always ! what will you do for a study ? and where shall we have our school-room ?"

Her papa smiled, and told her, that they were not all to live in that little house, but that he had taken the large house near, the gates of which opened upon Agnes' favourite violet lane. Nothing could exceed the child's delight at this news, and nothing would satisfy her but going to tell Mary Newton the good news, and then going to the new house. Mr. Mitchell, whilst he was uncertain whether he could get the house or not, refrained from telling her of his intention, for fear she should be disappointed, but he had just had a letter from the landlord with a favourable answer to his proposal.

Mary's eyes sparkled when she heard the good news, and, in her quiet way, she expressed her pleasure.

And then how happy was Agnes in running over the house, and finding new beauties everywhere, and she was not ready to go home to Beechwood Farm till she had fixed what each room was to be. The room she settled should be the school-room was a small room on the ground floor, with a glass door, overhung with monthly roses and jessamine, and opening upon a grass-plot. Whilst Agnes was delighting in her plans, and fixing her garden, &c., Miss Horton said to her, "You must remember, Agnes dear, that winter will come ; we shall not always have the roses in flower here, or like to walk out of this door on the grass plot ; the trees will be bare, and the snow will be on the ground."

"Well, then," answered the child, turning quickly round, "then we will look the other way at the bright fire ; and the book-case shall be here, and the piano there, and you shall sit here by the fire, and we will sing and

dance,—oh ! we shall never want for joy here, dear Miss Horton, shall we? and when the snow has done coming down we will sweep the broad gravel walk, and run till we are warm, and the frost will look so beautiful on these trees !” And so the happy child ran on till reminded that grandmamma would be waiting for her tea.

The prospect of packing up her things in London was the only thing that comforted Agnes at the thought of leaving her new-found delights ; the next morning she set off in good spirits, however, kissing her grandmamma and aunt fondly, and promising to come back again very soon. Their journey this time by railroad was soon performed, and they found Miss St. Clare with Caroline, ready to receive them, for they had written to say that they were coming.

Agnes was much quieter than usual, as she was rather afraid of her aunt Sophia,

whom she had hardly seen ; but when tea was over, and she and Miss Horton were with Caroline in their old schoolroom, (oh ! how dark it looked to Agnes,) she made up for her former silence by telling Caroline all she could think of about the new house. At last, almost tired of talking, she suddenly stopped, and looking at her sister, asked her if she was not very much delighted at the thoughts of living in the country. Caroline looked rather grave, and replied, that she was very happy in town ; and she could not think it would be half so pleasant, moped up in the country, with nobody to see from one week's end to another. "Why, you know, there are the Pearsons ; they lived in the country for the last year, and they are not like other people at all."

"Oh ! I am sure if they are not, like other people it is because they are a great deal nicer," said Agnes, eagerly. "Ellen Pearson is always so good, and looks so happy, and

is always trying to make every body happy about her, and she is so kind to her sisters, and Miss Horton says she's very clever,—did you not, Miss Horton ?”

“Indeed, my dear, I do not know any body that better performs the duties of an elder sister. As far as she can at her age—for, though she looks older, she is only sixteen—she supplies to her younger sister the place of an invalid mother, and though perhaps she does not go so much into the parks, and does not dress quite so fashionably as some of your companions, Caroline, she does what is far better, the time that other girls employ in dressing themselves smartly, she employs in working for the poor, and when too many others are gossiping idly together, she is either instructing her younger sisters or improving herself; besides, her attendance upon her mother prevents her going much into company, even if she wished it; depend upon it,

my dear Caroline, in time of trouble you would find Ellen Pearson a wiser and a better friend than most with whom you associate. Leaving the country has been a great trouble to her, but you never hear her complain, she is ready to find enjoyment in everything."

These words seemed rather a reflection on Caroline for her discontent at leaving what she thought the only place where she could be happy, so she was not very willing to allow Ellen Pearson much credit for her happy contented spirit.

It was a great sorrow to Agnes that she did not find in her sister one who would sympathise in her joy ; Miss Horton's pleasure was, however, scarcely less than her own. They were very busy packing up, Agnes planning where everything should go in the new house. Caroline, in the meantime, had other thoughts, and one morning after being with her aunt, Miss St. Clare, in her dressing-room

for about an hour, she went to Mr. Mitchell's library, and told him she had a favour to beg; he answered, that he should be very glad to grant it if it were in his power.

"There can be no great difficulty I should think, papa," Caroline began, rather hesitatingly; "aunt Sophia thinks it a great pity that I should go and live in the country; and she says, if you have no objection she should be very glad to have me to live with her at Cheltenham."

Mr. Mitchell looked grave, and after pausing for a few minutes, said, "And why does your aunt think it a pity for you to live in the country?"

Caroline blushed and hesitated, and began to speak once or twice, and at last said, "She thinks that—that—I shall never see anybody—that I should be quite buried, and get so awkward,—and she says, she could bring me out so well at Cheltenham."

The fact was, Miss St. Clare had told Caroline that such a pretty girl should not be moped up in the country, and never be seen by anybody, but Caroline did not like to say just this to her father, who, little satisfied with such reasons, continued—"As to your seeing nobody, and being buried in the country, I cannot but think that the happiness of a child of your age is more dependant upon the near relations with whom you will live in the country than upon the number of gay people you may have seen when you have driven out with your aunt ; and associating with none but well-bred people it is hardly likely you should grow so *very awkward* ; besides, my dear Caroline, you are yet but a child ; you have much, almost everything to learn, and if you were to live with your aunt at Cheltenham you would learn nothing."

"Oh ! yes, papa," interrupted Caroline eagerly, "aunt says, I should have the best

masters for music and singing, and dancing, and drawing."

"Ah ! my dear child, those things are the least part of what you have to learn ; not the best masters in these accomplishments will ever make you the good daughter, the kind sister, the wise friend your aunt Jane is ; you must learn to think less of the outside show, and more of the inward worth of people, before you are ready to mix in the world. No, my dear girl, I am sorry to disappoint you, but you must believe that it is for your own good ; you must tell your aunt that I am much obliged to her for her kind offer, but that I cannot spare you ; you must not quite forget poor papa ; will you, love?" And he drew her to him, and placed her on his knee.

Caroline kissed him affectionately, and though tears were in her eyes, she smiled through them, and promised him she would

try to be happy at Oaklands, for such was the name of their new house.

Feeling sure that Miss St. Clare would not try to reconcile Caroline to his determination Mr. Mitchell hastened his arrangements as much as he could, and it was not long before they were all ready to set off for Beechwood ; they were to stay at Mrs. Mitchell's whilst their own house was in preparation.

Several weeks were happily employed by the little girls in arranging their room and gardens, for Caroline, though disappointed in not accompanying her aunt Sophia to Cheltenham, was too much of a child not to enjoy the novelty of their new abode. Summer was over before they were quite settled, and Agnes sighed to see the roses all gone, and to bid farewell to the warm evenings of August ; but she was comforted by Miss Horton telling her that of all the seasons, the one she preferred in the country was Autumn.

AUTUMN.

There is a beautiful spirit breathing now
Its mellow richness on the clustered trees,
And, from a beaker full of richest dyes,
Pouring new glory on the Autumn woods,
And dipping in warm light the pillared clouds.

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

THERE were several corn-fields adjoining Oaklands, and Agnes looked forward with much pleasure to the corn harvest, and she often walked in these fields to watch the gradual ripening of the ear, and would bring word home to her papa that the "poppy field" or the "blackberry field" (so she called them on account of the number of those plants in the hedges,) was ready for reaping.

One fine morning in the middle of Sep-

tember, she was walking with Miss Horton in one of these fields. The day was very warm, and they sat on the bank by the hedge; not a breath was stirring amongst the corn, but in one spot Agnes discovered several ears moving, and then some fell to the ground. She called Miss Horton's attention, and very softly approaching, they discovered several little field-mice, some of which nibbled the stalk, and when it fell, others carried it off.

"Pretty little thieves!" exclaimed Agnes, "where do they take it?"

"They take it to their burrows in some bank, where they lay it up as a store for the winter; when there are many of them they are very troublesome to the farmers, and destroy a great deal of corn; and they will sometimes follow the reapers and eat the grains that fall from the ripe ear."

They watched the pretty little animals

for some time, and resuming their walk, went to call at Beechwood Farm to see Miss Mitchell, who was confined to the house with a bad cold. They found her with half a dozen little girls round her, whom she was teaching to sew; they came to her twice a week, and those who improved the most rapidly had the privilege of doing some work for their kind instructress. The children rose on Miss Horton's entrance, but Miss Mitchell bade them continue their work, whilst she went with her visitors into the other room, where they found old Mrs. Mitchell at her knitting. After kind inquiries on both sides, Miss Mitchell told Agnes she wanted to make her useful.

"If it is not *very* difficult, aunt, I shall be very glad to help you."

"I want you to teach the little girls in the other room to do sums."

"Oh, aunt!" exclaimed Agnes, looking

very much frightened, "I cannot, indeed I cannot ! can I, Miss Horton ?"

"I want you to find out for yourself," said her aunt, "whether you can. How many rules have you learnt ?"

"Numeration, Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division."

"Well, then, if you *know* these, though roughly, you can *teach* them, and *they* need not know more ; I should advise you to begin with Addition, and here is a little machine to help you."

As she spoke, she rose, and opening a cupboard, took out a frame with balls, such as is used in many infant schools ; she taught Agnes how to use it, and told her she might study it at home a little before she began to teach from it. Agnes, a little re-assured, thanked her aunt, and said she would do her best ; she said she would practise teaching Caroline about the balls.

She took home the frame, and was so earnest in preparing herself for her duty, that the next day but one she went to her pupils. The novelty of being taught by so young a child, amused the little girls ; but she was so gentle with them, and yet so animated, that they were soon interested, and got on very well ; she attended to them for half an hour every day.

One morning when she had taught them about a week, she came into the other room, where her aunt was, and sitting down at her feet, said,

“Aunt Jane, I feel as if I was a great deal older than I was a week since !”

“How is that, my dear?” asked her aunt.

“Because I can do some little good now, and I don’t think I did any before. How is it that some people live as if they thought they had nothing to do but to please them-

selves?—I do not mean,” said she interrupting herself, “that I think I am doing much, dear aunt, but I think that as I am so much happier doing the *very* little I can do, what a pity it is people do not make themselves much happier than they are by doing a great deal.”

“You have, my dear, fixed upon the cause of a great deal of the unhappiness of the world, and I hope, having the feeling you seem now to have of the advantage of doing good, you will not grow up, as too many do who are not *obliged* to exert themselves, spending the day in their own pleasures, never looking round them to see if they can make others happier or better. . I have known many girls who might have made numbers happy by imparting knowledge and sympathy, and very much increased their own happiness too, think they were doing their duty most amply if they sat indus-

triously during the greater part of the day at their fancy work, and then believe they had quite earned the *privilege* of spending hour after hour reading novels, which are very well as an occasional relaxation from graver pursuits, but which are sadly useless, if not injurious, as constant reading."

These last observations were rather addressed to Miss Horton than to Agnes, who, however, listened attentively, and, though not able to understand all, learnt the lesson, never too soon learnt, that our greatest happiness is produced by trying to make others happy; this agreeing with her present personal experience, was not likely to be soon forgotten, and thoroughly happy in having done her duty, she ran skipping home with Miss Horton, and was greeted on her return with the pleasant news that the reaping was to begin to-morrow.

Agnes was up the next day as soon as

it was light, and was very happy to find that it was a beautiful morning, and promised to be a very fine day. Directly after breakfast Miss Horton took her with Caroline into one of the fields, where, as the men had been at work as soon as they could see, there was a little space so far cleared that the children were not in the way. Agnes wanted to see the little mice again, but they had been so much disturbed that they were afraid to come out again. She saw some partridges, startled by the reapers, run into the next field ; and she was very much interested in watching many little birds, which appeared to be waiting till they could, unseen, run off with a grain or two of corn. Many women were employed in tying up the sheaves, and Agnes espied a little group of children near one of the banks, whom she supposed to belong to those who were busy. On coming nearer to them

she heard a sharp loud tone as if of anger. She hastened on to inquire the cause of the disturbance, and found that the group consisted of five or six boys and girls, of about seven or eight years of age, who were surrounding a very beautiful boy of about nine, who had on his knee a pale sickly little girl of three years old. The children were too fully occupied to hear Agnes coming near, and before she spoke she heard the following conversation.

“I’m sure, Charlie, little Mary will do quite well if you lay her on this bank in the sun, and you know we cannot play without you, for we none of us know how ; I think it’s very cross of you not to come with us when it’s only for that tiresome little thing.”

Charlie’s large deep grey eyes were quickly raised to the speaker, and almost flashed, as he answered, “And isn’t she motherless

and ill, and who would take care of her if I did not? and what signifies your play if she is but happy? ye know how she would cry and fret if I left her. Shame on you, Tommy Duncan; who would have heeded you when ye were a baby, if *her* mother had not tended you as if ye had been her own? I do not care for ye're calling me bad names, I will not leave my own darling for any of ye," and he pressed the child closely to his breast, and as he bent over her, a tear fell on her pale cheek; the child opened her eyes, but seeing his sweet smile, and feeling on her forehead the curls of his long bright hair, which hung on his shoulders, she smiled at him, and nestled closely in his arms, as if she felt how safe she was with him.

"Do ye not see," said he, raising his head, "how she trusts me, and ye would have me leave her!—no! leave us both; ye know I do

not care for your play when I have my own little Mary with me."

One or two of the children seemed to be ashamed of having asked him to leave his little charge, but as most of them still persisted in saying "it was very cross," and "the child could do very well without him," and that "he was not at all bound to do anything for her," &c., the better feeling of the few faded away, or was concealed, and they turned to leave him with no very pleasant countenances.

They went away on the side opposite to Agnès, and did not perceive her. Their moving gave her a full view of the young nurse and his charge. The former was, as we have said, about nine years old, his features were regular; his colour bright, his eyes shaded by long lashes, and his brown hair fell in ringlets round his shoulders; he was very well dressed, and seemed to belong to

the class of small farmers. His little friend was clean, but very poorly dressed, and a constant frown on her brow, and a compressed look about the mouth, told that she was a great sufferer.

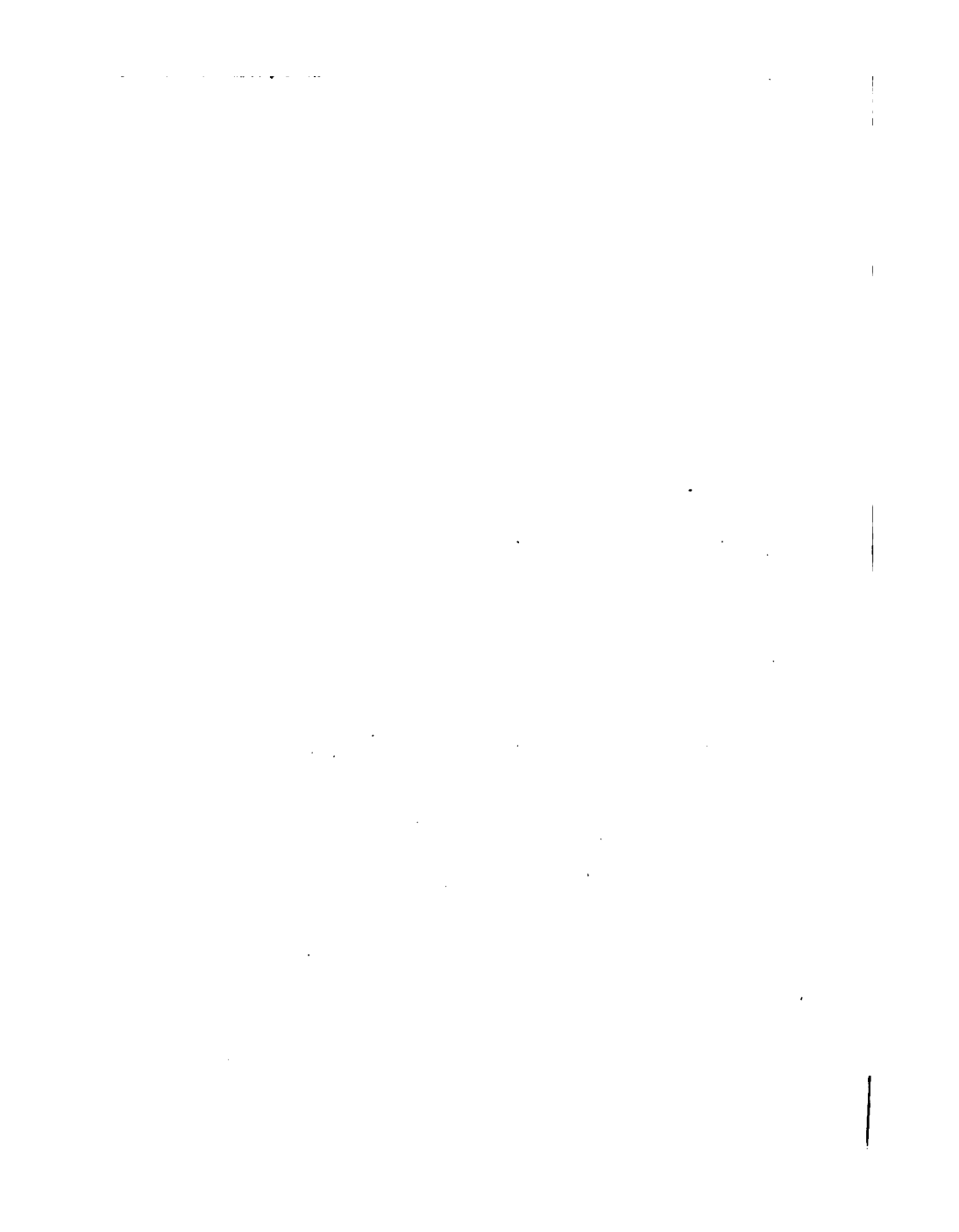
Charlie was bending over the child when his companions left him, but he raised his head on hearing Agnes' approaching footsteps. She smiled and spoke to him, and sitting down on the bank, began to play with the child ; they soon became capital friends, and at last little Mary consented to come to Agnes' knee, if she still kept Charlie's hand in hers. Agnes asked him about himself and the little girl ; but as his modesty prevented him from giving a full account of the child's obligations to him, we will relate what Agnes heard from other sources.

Charles Maltby was the only child of a respectable farmer, who lived very near Oaklands ; his mother was dead, but his father's



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The Sick Child.



house was kept by a very worthy kind-hearted woman, who encouraged Charles in all his benevolent plans. Close by the gate leading to his father's farm, lived a very poor man of the name of Parsons. He too had one child, this little Mary, whose mother, never well after her birth, died when the child was a year old. Charlie, at that time between six and seven, used, day after day, to take broth or sago to the sick woman, whose distress he had himself discovered and represented to the housekeeper ; he would nurse the child, who soon grew very fond of him, whilst the mother rested, would sweep the hearth, scour the floor, and help the poor woman in every possible way. Parsons himself was a hard-working man, but having done his work, and brought home his scanty wages, he thought he had no further duties to perform, and he expected his wife to wait upon *him*, this she would not have been equal to,

had not Charlie's help in the day enabled her to rest herself then, to prepare for her husband's return. Charlie was with the poor woman when she died, and he promised never to forget the child. He wished to have taken it home, but its father would not allow that, but said that he might take care of it as much as he liked ; and this boy, with an uncommonly lively spirit, and as fond of play as boy could be, devoted himself to this little girl, sickly and delicate as she was. The poor child repaid him as well as she could, by being passionately fond of him. When she was ill, she could not bear him to be very long away, unless she was with the housekeeper ; but when she was pretty well, she was so unselfish in her love that she would lie quite happily on a bank out of doors, and watch him playing with his little companions. This day, however, he knew very well that she

was not well enough to be left, and no persuasion could induce him on such occasions to neglect her for his own amusement. She was such a quiet child, that the master of the school where Charlie went, a kind-hearted man, allowed him to bring his little nursling with him to school. He was now beginning to teach her the alphabet.

Part only of this Agnes heard from Charlie himself; but enough to interest her in him very much; and Miss Horton and Caroline coming up to them, she wished her new friends good-bye, and told them what she had heard. From Miss Mitchell she heard the remainder of the story, and day after day she went to the same place, hoping to meet them again, but they were not there. Many children were playing about, but she missed the beautiful boy and his young *protégée*; she asked one of the group, but received no satisfactory answer. One day,

however, when one of the fields was cleared, and many children were gleaning, she caught a glimpse of Charlie's bright curls ; she ran up to him, and inquired after little Mary.

"Very poorly, indeed, thank you, but she wanted me to come and glean for her, so I left her safe with our housekeeper, and I am working hard to take her a good basket full."

One or two little girls near, on hearing this, brought each a handful and placed it in his basket for little Mary ; and Charlie thanked them more heartily than he would have done for any favour to himself.

When the corn harvest was quite completed, Agnes sighed to think that it could not come again for a whole year, and a succession of rainy days made her think that all out-of-door pleasures were over, and that winter was coming. Even Agnes'

gay spirits were rather subdued, when morning after morning she heard the rain pattering against their bed-room window, and her frequent exclamation of "Oh! Miss Horton, I really think *is* going to clear; look, it seems lighter," was generally followed by "Oh! dear me! its raining faster than ever!"

One afternoon, however, when they were very busy painting some new pictures which had just come from London, in one of those delightful boxes which are so great a treasure in the country, Agnes raised her head quickly, and exclaimed, "There he is at last!"

"Who is it?" was the question from both Miss Horton and Caroline.

"The sun, do you not see him shining on that old tree?"

It was quite true; and joyfully were his beams greeted by the trio; they stood at

the window watching the clouds disperse, and the blue sky spread out, and then the children eagerly went to get ready, and they spent an hour on the broad gravel-walk, which always dried sooner than any other part. This bright afternoon was the forerunner of many others. The sky, as Agnes said, seemed to be tired of crying, and to be quite in good-humour again.

One morning at breakfast, after about ten days' fine weather, Mr. Mitchell said, "Who likes nuts?"

"I do,"—"I do," sounded at once from the children. "Have you got any for us?"

"No, you must get them for yourselves."

"What, go nutting?" almost screamed Agnes.

"Yes,—go nutting; I have ordered the carriage at ten, and will drive a mile or two, and walk the rest of the way to the wood, through a green lane, which will, I

think, be now quite dry. Ask Miss Horton to give you a holiday, and to come with you."

Agnes threw her arms round Miss Horton's neck, and the whispered request was answered by a kiss.

"Oh! but —" said the child, suddenly stopping, "there is my class, I shall not have done till a little after ten; might the carriage wait a little, papa?"

Her papa agreed, and Agnes ran to the farm to meet her little class, and to tell aunt Jane the good news, and to promise to bring her a basket of nuts.

Never did a merrier party set out. They drove rather more than two miles, and left the carriage at the end of a wide green lane, the hedges of which were loaded with blackberries. These were almost as great an attraction as the nuts, but as Miss Horton said they would not keep very well if they

were gathered then, the children, after having eaten a few, postponed getting the rest until their return.

When they had walked about a mile in this lane, they came to a little gate, which led into the nut-wood. Mr. Mitchell carried the largest basket ; he did not gather many nuts, and when Agnes had got some and wished to put them into his basket, which would hold all together, he told her to wait till all the little baskets were full. At last the children, hot and tired, with full baskets threw themselves down on the projecting trunk of an old tree, and Agnes exclaimed, "Oh ! I am *so* hungry, I do wish I had brought a piece of bread."

Upon this Mr. Mitchell sat down, and opening his large basket, brought from it plenty of sandwiches and buns. Agnes was charmed at this welcome surprise, and said how sly it was of him to pretend that he

would not help them to carry the nuts, when, after all, his basket was a great deal heavier than theirs.

When they were quite rested and refreshed, they went further on, and as the large basket was now quite empty, there was abundance of room for more nuts. Agnes was delighted with some squirrels that she watched leaping from bough to bough, and amused herself with watching them gathering the nuts, and bringing them down to hide in the ground, for that is the plan of these ingenious little creatures, and they almost always remember where they have concealed their treasure of either nuts or acorns, and when they *do* forget, they do a service by it, for a tree grows from the hidden seed. They saw, too, a dormouse collecting its winter stock of food, but it was so shy, that on the slightest sound of footsteps it ran away to its hole. Agnes laid a little heap of nuts near its hole, and

drawing back, and remaining quite still, was delighted to see the little fellow come out, and, after looking quickly round, carry off the nuts one by one to his snug little house.

The day's pleasure must end, and it was time to leave the wood. They gathered as many blackberries as they had room for on their way back, and found the carriage waiting for them at the end of the lane. They were quite ready for an early tea when they arrived at home. Aunt Jane came up for an hour to hear their adventures, and as she was going home, she said, looking at the clouds,

"I think it was well you went when you did, for I am afraid it will rain to-morrow."

"What can aunt Jane mean by saying that it will rain to-morrow?" asked Agnes, "I think it looks bright and beautiful."

"That very bright colour when the sun

is setting, my dear," replied Miss Horton, "generally precedes rain ; your aunt has lived so long in the country that she has been accustomed to watch the signs of the weather."

Miss Mitchell's prediction was quite correct, for the first sound Agnes heard on waking was the quiet drip, drip, drip, of determined rain.

Agnes, the merry Agnes, came down to breakfast in no very happy mood. She had planned some out-of-doors amusement for the day : besides, she had promised to get up at seven to do the lessons which she had left undone the day before because she was tired. The promise was quite voluntary, and she had the full intention of performing it ; but when, on being called at seven, she heard the rain, she turned round again for another nap, and did not wake till the first breakfast bell rang at a quarter past eight.

She started up, and dressed herself as quickly as she could, but she was not down till the family had assembled. This was so unusual for Agnes, that Mr. Mitchell was quite uneasy. They had supposed that she was busy in the school-room till the second bell rang, and then, surprised that she did not come, Caroline went to see after her, and in the meantime she appeared with heavy eyes, and not looking as sweet-tempered as usual. Her papa anxiously inquired what was the matter, but was re-assured when he heard that it was only laziness.

After breakfast she was again angry with herself for having neglected her lessons, and she could not settle happily to anything; she said her sums *would not* come right, that her pen *would not* make fine strokes, and she was on the point of bursting into tears over her French exercise, when Miss

Horton, perceiving exactly what was the matter with her, said gently,

“Go and play at ball in the gallery for a quarter of an hour, you will do your lessons better after that.”

She went, and returning at the end of the time with a fresh colour and light step, threw her arms round Miss Horton’s neck, and asked her to forgive her for being so naughty.

“It seems to me,” she said, “as if bad things always came after each other ; there’s very little chance of stopping in the middle, unless somebody helps one, as you did by sending me to play in the gallery.”

“But that, my child, is what you should learn to do for yourself ; you might have *stopped*, as you say, after your first fault, by being good-tempered when you came down, and remembering that it was your own fault,

and not that of your pen, pencil, or dictionary, that your lessons were not done."

Agnes promised to try to help herself another time, and having resumed her lessons, she found that her sums *would* come right, and the pen *would* write as she wished it; for she discovered that she had always forgotten to add in the pence, and that she was holding her pen badly. When her lessons were done, she was half disposed to grumble again that the rain continued, for Mr. Mitchell had said at breakfast that he thought it would clear, but she remembered in time, and instead of longing to be out of doors, she thought of what she could do in the house. She suddenly recollected that the last rainy day she had cut out a cloak for her doll, and that she had never thought of it since; so she ran to find it, and employed herself happily till dinner-

time in making it. Mr. Mitchell had ridden over to the next market town on business, and after dinner produced a new back-gammon board, and began to teach the children to play. When they were sitting round the fire at the dark hour, Agnes said,

“Papa, how did you know I had not gone on being cross, and then I should not have deserved the back-gammon?”

Her papa smiled at the little moralizer, and replied, “I had so much confidence in Miss Horton’s good management, and your own efforts, my dear little girl, that I thought I might venture to bring a pleasure for you, but I *did* ask Miss Horton whether my hopes were verified, and she gave so good an account of you both, that I was glad I had provided an amusement for this rainy afternoon. And now, my dear children, as November is just here, and then December

will soon come, and as December brings Christmas with it, what do you say to our filling some of our spare rooms during the Christmas holidays?—which of your friends should you like to have? you may each choose one, and I will choose one.”

Caroline and Agnes both looked delighted ; Caroline chose Clara Grey, and Agnes, Emma Clarke.

“And Miss Horton?” said Mr. Mitchell, turning to her.

Miss Horton hesitated a moment, and then mentioned Ellen Pearson, if she could be spared from home.

“Very good,” replied Mr. Mitchell, “and for my choice I will have your cousin Edward Constable.”

Edward Constable, a young man who had travelled in many different countries, and seen much that was interesting, was a great

favourite with the children ; so this arrangement gave general satisfaction, and Agnes was so much afraid of their being engaged, though it wanted more than six weeks to the time of their coming, that she begged her papa to write to them all at once.

He complied with her request, and favourable answers having in a few days been returned, we will leave our young friends to look forward to the pleasures of Winter.

WINTER.

There's a silvery crisp on the grass,
 And a cluster of gems on the thorn.

* * * *

I have hearthstones encircled by many a throng,
 Who awaken the jest, and the laugh, and the song,
 As if they would never grow old.

J. C. PRINCE.

ON Thursday the 21st of December, truly the shortest day, at four o'clock, a coach from Exeter drove up to the door of the inn at Hamelthorn, for so we shall call the market town about five miles from Oaklands. The coach was quite full inside and out; and many hampers and baskets hanging at the back, spoke of welcome Christmas presents.

The inside of the coach was occupied by two little girls, two lads and a young man. The two lads, about twelve and fifteen, ap-

peared to be brothers, and one of the girls was a sister of theirs. The other, a pale delicate looking child of about ten years old, in deep mourning, sat very silently gazing at her companions, but never joining in their merriment. The young man tried to make her talk, but, without any sulkiness, she avoided saying more than was absolutely necessary as an answer to his questions.

When the coach stopped the elder lad opened the door directly, and asked the ostler who came up whether the carriage was come. The man touched his hat and replied, that it had been waiting half an hour; but that Sir Henry was gone into the town, and had desired that they would not set off until his return.

The boy then helped his sister to get out. The younger lad lingered for a few moments, and hesitatingly asked "what this young

lady would do?" looking at the other little girl.

"Oh ! la ! never mind her ; she will take care of herself, or somebody will take care of her. Come on, Harry," was his brother's answer.

Harry seemed reluctant to leave her, and turning again to her, he asked if he should see after her carriage for her. The little girl coloured deeply, and gently answered that she was much obliged to him, but that she was not expecting anybody to meet her. The boy looked only half satisfied, but his brother impatiently calling him, he wished her good-day, and left the coach.

Edward Constable (for he was the young man), got out and assisted his little companion, for, as the coach stopped at that town, he knew she could not be going forward in it. She stood by timidly whilst he saw after the luggage, and told him which

was hers : it was all marked E. H. When it was collected, he asked her where she was going, and whether he should order a porter or a coach. The tears came into the child's eyes, as she answered,

“I do not know exactly where I am to go. I think I had better sleep here to-night ; I have got enough money, and then I can see about it better in the morning ;” and she looked round her, as if she was confused by the light moving about in the inn-yard.

Mr. Constable was unwilling to leave so young a child in an inn by herself, yet he did not like to put off going to Oaklands, as his friends were expecting him ; so ordering a chaise for himself, he took her into a room where a cheerful fire made them feel more comfortable, for they were very cold after travelling so long a distance on such a day.

The little girl, when she became warmer was rather more communicative.

After some little hesitation, she said, "I am come all the way from Exeter. I have been to school there, but I am not to stay now, for there's no more money. And I don't know where I am to live; for they say aunt's a governess, so I suppose I can't live with her; but there's nobody else, so I don't know what I shall do."

"What is your aunt's name? and where does she live, my dear?" asked her new friend.

"She lives somewhere not very far from here, but I forget the name of the place,—but its on the letter, I have got it here," feeling in her pocket, "the gentleman's name where she lives is Mitchell."

"Then is her name Horton? and does she live at Oaklands?" exclaimed Edward, quickly.

"Oh! do you know her, and will you take me to her?" and the little girl, quite over-

come after all her perplexity to find some one who could help her at last, threw herself into his arms and burst into tears.

He soothed her, and told her that he did know her aunt, and that he was going to Oaklands that night, and would take her with him, "but," he added, "does she know you are coming?"

"Oh, no! she knows nothing at all about me, but I was to go there and give her this letter," and she took one from her pocket, directed in a trembling feeble hand "Miss Horton," and the rest of the direction added in another hand.

The little girl seemed so agitated that Edward did not think it well to press her to tell him more of her story, so he ordered a cup of coffee and a sandwich for both of them; and little Emily, for such was the child's name, was so much refreshed that she said she was quite ready to set out.

During their five miles' drive, she told him that her governess at Exeter, where she had been three years, had told her that she had heard that her father was dead, and as he could not pay any more for her, she could not keep her at school.

The real state of the case was this :—The Miss Horton, whom we know as being Mr. Mitchell's governess, had an only brother, of whom she had not heard for ten or eleven years. They had been early separated, and his conduct had been such as to prevent any attachment on her part to him. He went abroad, and she lost sight of him completely. There he married, and losing his wife soon after the birth of little Emily, he travelled about, carrying the child with him, by turns indulging and beating her till she was seven years old. He then sent her to a celebrated school in Exeter, and paid seventy guineas a year for three years. Just

before this time Mrs. Hilton (the lady who conducted the school), received a letter from the medical man who had attended Mr. Horton, to tell her of his death, and to say that not a penny remained for the child, except the seventy pounds he sent ; and it was her father's wish that she should find out her aunt and go to her. He said that this aunt was governess to a Mr. Mitchell in London, but further he could not direct. Mrs. Hilton knew of Mr. Mitchell's removal, and finding that the child would no longer be profitable to her, she was glad to get rid of her, so she sent her to the town of Hamelthorn, with the letter containing the full direction, trusting to her arriving safely. Fortunately she met with a good friend in Edward Constable ; and now, having taken them part of the way on their journey, we must go to our friends at Oaklands, who are expecting their

last visitor to-day, for Ellen Pearson, Clara Grey, and Emma Clarke, had come together a day or two before.

They were all sitting round a blazing fire, asking and guessing riddles, and playing at cross questions and crooked answers. The clock struck six, and Mr. Mitchell said; "I am afraid Edward will not come to-night; the coach gets in to Hamelthorn at four, and allowing for some delay, he ought to have been here now."

"The snow has made the roads very heavy," suggested Ellen.

In the midst of various speculations as to what might have detained their visitor, a servant called Mr. Mitchell out of the room. The children settled that it could not be cousin Edward, because they would have heard the chaise wheels, and he would have rapped at the door. They continued listening for him, therefore, when a message came

for Miss Horton. She left the room, and this rather excited the curiosity of the younger part of the company, and after various conjectures on the subject, Clara Grey proposed that they should go and listen at the drawing-room door, which they had heard shut soon after Miss Horton was called out. This proposal at once reminded Agnes of the impropriety of trying to find out what her papa and Miss Horton were talking about, and they tried to turn their attention to some game. They were busily engaged when the door opened, and Edward Constable walked in. He was joyfully greeted, and they forgot all their wonder in asking him about his journey. Mr. Mitchell soon joined them, and explained Miss Horton's absence by saying that she was engaged up stairs.

A box was presently brought in, which Edward unpacked, and taking from it a

beautiful paint-box, presented it to Caroline, and a very handsome, large microscope to Agnes.

The girls were delighted with their presents, and Agnes whispered to him, "What have you brought for Miss Horton?"

Edward replied that he had brought Miss Horton a much larger present than either of theirs, larger than Agnes herself.

"Larger than I am! oh! cousin Edward you must be joking!"

"No, I am quite serious,—larger than you are."

"Is it a carriage?" guessed Agnes.

"No; something alive."

"Alive! it must be a horse."

"No; it can talk."

"Oh! a parrot! but then—" correcting herself, "a parrot is a great deal smaller than I am. What is it, cousin Edward? and may I go and see?"

“My dear little girl, I have brought Miss Horton a niece.”

Many were the exclamations of wonder at this announcement ; upon which Edward told them the history of his introduction to the little girl.

After this account, in which they were very much interested, it was with some difficulty that Agnes could be restrained from running to see the new inmate.

“You know, my dear,” said her papa, “that Miss Horton, though her aunt, is quite a stranger yet, and she must not see any one else to-night.”

In about an hour Miss Horton came back, and said that she had left Emily fast asleep, as she was quite tired out with the day’s adventures.

After tea they had some quiet games, that they might not disturb the little sleeper, and they examined Agnes’ new microscope. She

said she was sure she could never learn to put it together by herself, there were so many pieces, but her cousin promised to teach her little by little, whilst he was there, and by the time he went away, he was sure she would be able to do it very well.

When Agnes wished Miss Horton good-night, she asked her if she might see Emily to-morrow.

"If she is asleep now, my dear," replied Miss Horton, "you may just see her."

She stepped in to ascertain this, and having heard her quiet, deep breathing, she called in Agnes to see. Emily was lying with one hand outside the clothes, the other under her face. One or two of her black ringlets came from under her cap, and made her pale cheeks look paler still. Agnes was so afraid of disturbing her that she did not breathe a syllable whilst she was in the room, but as soon as they were out of hearing, she

exclaimed "How beautiful!" and very beautiful indeed the little stranger looked, in the perfect repose of sleep, after such exhaustion and excitement.

Long after the rest of the family were asleep, Miss Horton sat looking at the child as she slept, and thinking on her past life, and her prospects for the future. That future, however, depended so much on Mr. Mitchell, that Miss Horton could not herself decide upon anything, and breathing a prayer of thankfulness to that power which had protected the helpless child, and brought her into safety, she lay down by her side and slept.

Christmas mornings are, as we all know, very dark mornings, and the family at Oaklands were not very early risers at that season.

About half past nine on the morning of the 22nd of December, the party assembled

round the breakfast table, and little Emily was introduced to her new friends. She sat down by her aunt, who was making breakfast, and holding out her hand to Edward Constable, asked him to sit beside her. She was very quiet during breakfast time, and not wishing to make her uncomfortable, no one said much to her, but they went on merrily talking to each other to make her feel at home ; sometimes she raised her large black eyes, and fixed them on the person who was speaking, as if she would learn all she could of them.

After breakfast, when they were standing round the fire, settling the amusements of the day, Emily slipped in between Ellen Pearson and Agnes, and said to the former,

“ You shall be my friend, and Agnes my playfellow.”

They laughed at her distinction, and Emma Clarke said, “ And may not I be your play-

fellow too, for Agnes and I always play together?"

Emily drew back a step or two, and looking at the little speaker, said, "No, you are not dressed well enough!"

Poor Emma shrank back, blushing, and Emily looked round as if quite sure of meeting with approval.

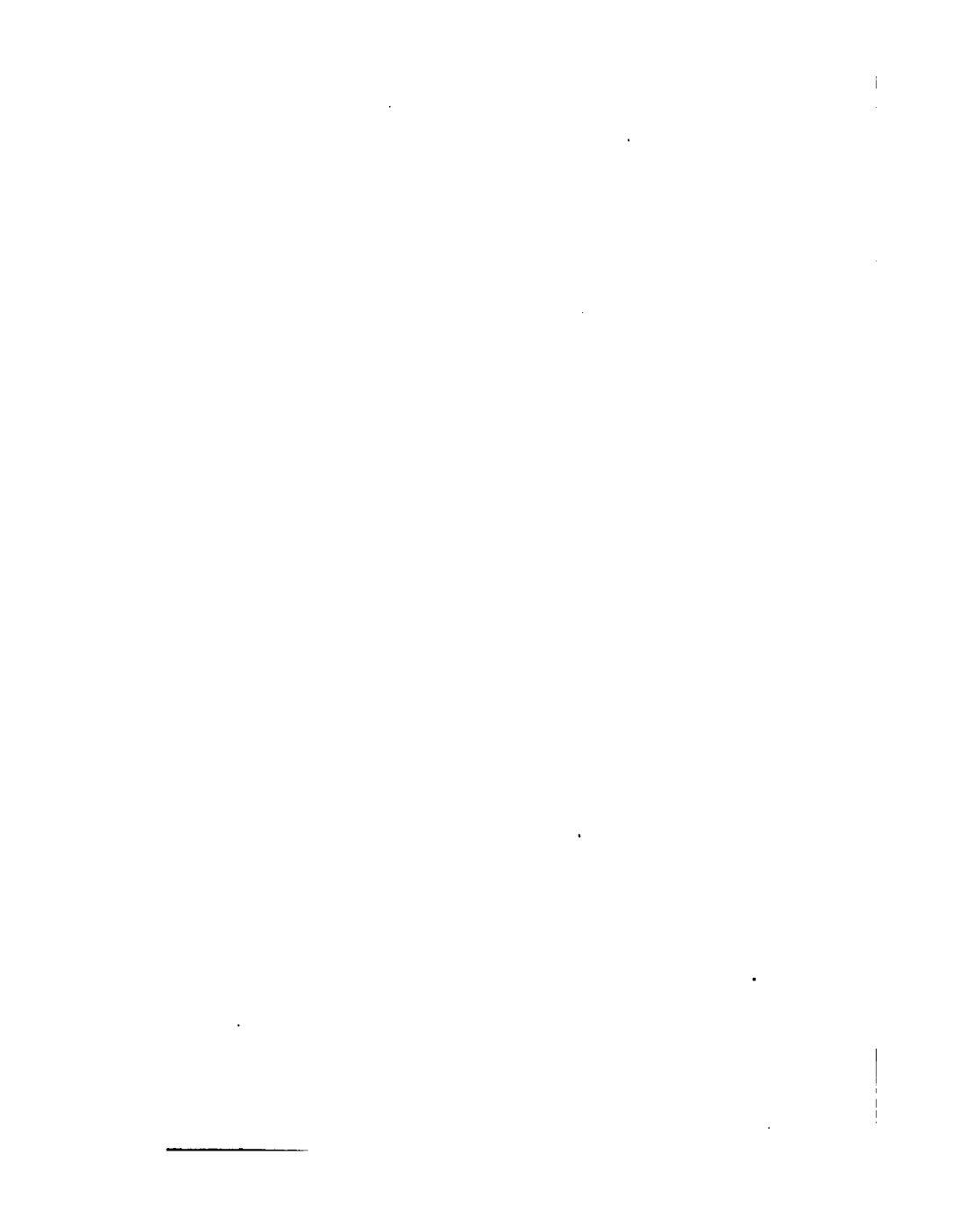
Caroline and Clara, I am sorry to say, enjoyed it, for they had often laughed at Emma's dress, which, as she was an orphan living with her grandmother, who had a very small income, was, though always neat, very plain. Agnes had a struggle for a moment, but good feeling prevailed, and putting her arm round Emma's neck, she kissed her, and said,

"She is never cross or unkind, and that is better, as old nurse says, than if she was dressed in cloth of gold."

Miss Horton, grieved to see this first proof



The Microscope.



of a neglected education, gravely but kindly pointed out the little importance of dress compared with goodness, and reminded Emily that she owed all *her* dress to the kindness of others. Her colour rose, and tears came into her eyes at this reproof. To withdraw attention from what had just occurred, Edward proposed that, as the heavy snow prevented their going out, they should have an examination of the microscope. All most willingly agreed ; and having put together the various parts, he placed an object for examination. Each in looking through the glass gave a different account of what she saw. One said it was a piece of muslin, another gauze, a third ribbon, a fourth silk ; but, when taken from under the glass, it proved to be part of the wing of a dragon-fly. When they were satisfied about this, another object was put under the glass, and they all decided that it was broken spar,

or some sparkling stone, and what was their surprise when they found that it was snow. In time they became more quick in finding out what the objects were, and they passed more than two hours very happily in this manner. Skipping-rope and battledore and shuttlecock, in the gallery, occupied the time till dinner.

After dinner, when they gathered round the fire, Edward said, "Who will learn a new game?"

"I!"—"I!"—"I!" sounded all round; and "What is it?" was eagerly asked.

"I call it grammatical coach and horses," he answered.

"Grammatical coach and horses!" exclaimed the children; "what a very funny name! and what does it mean?"

"How do you play at coach and horses?" he asked.

"Why," said Agnes, "this is the way:

we are each some part,—suppose Caroline is the coach, Clara the horses, Emily the coachman, Ellen the door, and all in that way. Then you tell a story about it, and every time our name is mentioned we get up and turn round ; that is *real* coach and horses ;—but how *can* you make it grammatical, cousin Edward ?”

“In this way, cousin Agnes. Instead of being each of you a part of the vehicle or its accompaniments, you are each of you a part of speech ; and I tell a story about anything ; and every time I stop at a word, the part of speech which that word is, must turn round. Will you try it ?”

They all answered in the affirmative, and proceeded to choose their characters. As there were not enough to have every part of speech, article and noun, as being very easy, were omitted. Miss Horton was an adverb, Ellen Pearson a conjunction, Caro-

line an adjective, Clara Grey a preposition, Emily Horton a pronoun, Emma Clarke a verb, and Agnes an interjection. These arrangements being made, Edward Constable began his story in a very dismal tone of voice.

“A long time ago, a solitary traveller was journeying through a desolate region. Nothing was near him but bare rocks and stunted trees. The wind howled fearfully and the sky was covered with clouds. The sun had set, he did not know which way to turn, and was afraid he could not find any shelter from the coming storm, when, turning round a sharp-piece of rock, what did he come to—?”

“Oh! was it a lion?” almost screamed Emily.

A burst of laughter followed this question, which reminded Clara that the narrator had stopped at her word, for she too had been

thinking so much more of the story than the game, that she fancied it a real question and not a puzzle. The story was then continued, "but a hollow cave, which seemed made exactly for him to take shelter in. With great joy he entered it, and very fortunate it was that he had found it," (Emily was more on the watch, and turned round directly), "for in five minutes the rain fell in torrents. And before the storm ended—" (Emma Clarke was reminded by her neighbours that this was her word), "the daylight was quite gone, so the traveller determined to stay all night and make himself as comfortable as she could. The ground was sandy—" (Caroline remembered), "so it was tolerably comfortable, and he had settled himself for a night's rest, when, alas!—"

"Oh! I thought I should never come!" cried Agnes, giving herself, in her energy, two additional turns.

“What should he hear but the roar, he thought, of a wild beast. He listened attentively, but now, seeing a flash of lightning, he concluded it must have been **thunder**, and as the storm was now passing over, he went to sleep pretty comfortably—”

Here Miss Horton remembered her character; and here we will leave the story which was, however, continued at some length, much to the amusement of the young auditors.

The next day was one of those bright, clear, quiet days, when the snow is so crisp under your feet that it crackles as you step upon it. The falling snow had for two days prevented any of the young party from going out, and during breakfast they were planning their day's amusement, when Emily, looking out of the window, exclaimed,

“Oh! do look! what a shabby looking

woman! She must have got something to sell; look at all those bundles that man is carrying behind her!"

This exclamation made all turn to look, and Emily felt very foolish when Agnes cried,

"Oh! its dear Aunt Jane! What a long time it is since we saw her!" and running out, opened the front door, and soon brought her in.

She had seen all the guests but Emily, for Edward Constable had been in the snow the day before to see his old friends. He had told her Emily's story, and Miss Mitchell with her usual kindness welcomed the little girl amongst them, and then, answering Agnes' many questions of where she was going? and what she *could* be going to do with all those things? she said,

"I am going my Christmas rounds, my dear child, and I thought I would call to

see if any of you would like to go with me, or whether you have formed other plans."

They all declared that they should like nothing better than to accompany her, and in a quarter of an hour, they were all equipped and had set out. A merry ~~walk~~, or rather run, they had over the bright sparkling snow that crackled as they went. Every branch and spray was covered with hoar frost, and they gaily shook it off, on each other, and bonnets and cloaks seemed covered with spangles, but the little particles of ice were so dry that they danced off again and left no mark.

They had to go along a lane of some length before they arrived at the village, and they were quite warm when they came to the end of it. Here Miss Mitchell said they must divide, as they were too large a party to go into the cottages. Agnes begged to

stay with her aunt, and Miss Horton said she wished Emily to accompany them, so these four were of the village party, and the rest, under Edward's care, were to continue their walk.

"Let us see," said he at parting, "which of us will bring home the most interesting account of our adventures."

Many cottages did they visit that morning, and not one did Miss Mitchell leave without making its inhabitants happier by a kind word or a gift. The man who accompanied them carried various articles of warm clothing, which Miss Mitchell was in the habit of distributing every winter to the old and infirm. They were all made by herself, and this added greatly to their value in the eyes of those who loved and respected her as all the villagers did.

They went to one cottage which appeared rather better than the others. It stood

in a garden, and **everything** about it was very neat. The door was opened by a young woman in a widow's dress, who, in answer to Miss Mitchell's inquiry of "how little Lucy was?" said she was so weak she could not last many days.

This little girl was her only child. She had lost her husband in a fever a month since, and the child had taken it from him. The fever had left her now, but she was sinking rapidly. The mother was very pale and anxious looking, but seemed calm and resigned. She shewed Miss Mitchell a rose tree in the window, which she said was a great favourite of little Lucy's.

"But you see, ma'am," she added, "it is fading away as she fades; there are but very few green leaves on it; neither my darling nor her favourite will live to see another spring. It is a sore trial," she continued, "to part with the two dearest one

has, but I am not without my comforts in my troubles; when my hands are not so full of my own cares, I can be a better daughter to my mother, for she is but poorly off at my brother's, and her happy spirit will make my home cheerful, if it is not so gay as it has been. I owe all the peace I feel in my sorrows to her good lessons and her better example. She early taught me to remember that we are not the best judges of what will make us happy, and though my heart will soon be shut up from the love of a wife and a mother on earth, that is no reason why it should not be open to receive into it those that need its care. But I am hindering you, ladies, and I know you have many to see to-day, Miss Mitchell. I wish you good morning," and after seeing them out of the little garden, she turned to the sick bed of her only child, if not happy in the possession of many

earthly blessings, yet calm in the possession of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

This scene was one to think of, not to talk about, and the little party remained quite silent till they arrived at the next cottage.

Many different characters they met with this morning, and each had its interest. When they had finished all their calls, not forgetting our old friend Mary, whom they made very happy with a book and a warm shawl, Miss Horton took Emily's hand, and asked Miss Mitchell to precede them with Agnes.

"And now, my dear child," said she, "how do you think Miss Mitchell is able to give away so many things."

"Oh! she must be very rich!" was the child's reply. •

"No, she is not at all rich; I will tell

you how it is. She never wastes money on herself. She never buys a new gown without thinking whether the old one would not do a little while longer, and whether she might not spend the money on some one who wants it more. This is the reason why she does not always wear handsome clothes, and why she does so much good."

Emily was silent for a few moments, and then looking up at her aunt, she said, "I'm very sorry, aunt, I said what I did about her looking shabby; I'm sure she's very good, I'll try and remember this, whenever I see anybody dressed badly,—and—" continued she hesitatingly, "it was very rude what I said yesterday about Emma Clarke. She has, I dare say, a very good reason too. Shall I tell her when I see her that I am sorry?"

Her aunt, pleased to find that she was ready to acknowledge her faults, told her

she had better do so, and talking on their way of what they had seen, they soon reached Oaklands. They met the rest of the party at the gate, and having persuaded Aunt Jane to stay dinner, they postponed the history of their adventures till afterwards.

Ellen Pearson and Edward Constable related between them a very interesting account of their walk, and the younger ones told what they had learnt of the good that snow does in keeping the plants warm, and about the animals that sleep during the winter.

“Oh, yes!” said Agnes, “do you not remember, Caroline, that when we saw the little dormouse, that day we were nutting, Miss Horton told us it stayed all the winter in its warm little nest? But everything we miss in the winter does not hide itself does it, cousin Edward?”

“Oh! no. A great many birds leave this

country when the weather begins to grow cold, and go to a warmer climate, and then they come back in the spring."

"How do insects live?" asked Emma; they seem such delicate little things, that a sharp frost must surely kill them."

"Many are destroyed in that way; but some in the egg, others as chrysalids, live through the winter in some sheltered spot; and you may see, when there is some early mild weather, a few stray butterflies come out of their cases to enjoy the first beams of the spring sun. Many chrysalids, too, are in the ground all the winter, particularly those of beetles."

"Well!" said Emily, "I cannot see any particular good in little insects living through the winter. I think it would be much better if they were not born till the Spring, when they would be quite warm and comfortable!"

Edward Constable could not help smiling as he asked, "And could they *be born* as you call it, unless some butterflies lived through the winter to lay eggs in the Spring? You know all insects come from eggs which are laid by the perfect insect. From these eggs come the caterpillars or grubs, then these change, and are in a torpid state for some time, and from these again the perfect insect is formed. Butterflies, moths, wasps, bees, dragon-flies, &c. all undergo the same changes, and if they all died before winter, there could be none to *be born* in the Spring."

Emily thanked him for his explanation, and begged Miss Mitchell and Miss Horton to give an account of their morning.

It was agreed by all that the adventures of the separate parties were each so pleasant, that there was no use in comparing them. "But," said Aunt Jane, "let us see what lessons have been learnt from them, and then

we shall judge better of their respective claims."

Agnes said she had learnt from what she had seen and heard that there is some comfort in every trouble, that is not brought on by their own fault.

Emily, blushing, and looking timidly at Miss Mitchell, said she had learnt how much good may be done, by thinking of others more than of ourselves.

"Oh! you mean dear Aunt Jane," said Agnes, "yes, that's quite right; she always is thinking whether somebody else is not wanting something. I do think, unless grand-mamma reminded her, she never would get anything for herself!"

Aunt Jane smiled, and turning to the rest, asked what they had learnt?

"I can hardly call it a new idea," said Ellen Pearson, "but I have been very much struck with the goodness that makes useful

suppose we play at the game of 'sitting quiet,' until I can talk."

The children good-humouredly consented to this rest, and, grouping themselves round Edward and Miss Horton, they patiently waited for what the traveller might have to tell.

At length a thought, though a sad one, seemed to come across Edward's mind, and he began.

"My tale, dear Agnes, shall be of no distant land, but yet of a region of which you, as yet, know but little, and if you are interested in what I have to tell, I cannot refer you to a better teacher and guide than your aunt Jane. The region I mean is where the *very* poor live, the very poor in the large towns, where it seems as if the rich had done their best to build them out of sight. You have seen poor cottages in this neighbourhood, but they can give you very little idea of the

way in which the poor live in narrow, crowded streets, in dark cellars, and dismal garrets. It was in one of these large towns that I knew a poor woman. She was the eldest daughter of a respectable family, and never knew, during her girlhood, what it was to want bread. She married very young one of her father's workmen, and continued during her mother's life-time to reside in her father's house, and there her eldest boy was born; but after her mother's death, she and her father did not agree, and she left his house with her husband and child.

"A little girl was the next child, little Annie, a sweet gentle creature, of whom her father was passionately fond. He was a weaver by trade, and a poor trade it often is, and year by year they became poorer, food was more scantily supplied, and the little Annie began to droop. She would sit for hours by the fireside, and pick out

bits of plaster from the walls, and eat them—”

“Oh, cousin Edward!” interrupted Agnes, with tears in her eyes, “was there nothing but that for her to eat?”

“Not exactly so, my dear, but the craving feeling of hunger, which happily you have never felt, is partly satisfied, after a poor meal, by filling the stomach even with what cannot be digested. Another little boy was added to the family, and their anxieties increased day by day. The husband was out of work very frequently, and at length the affectionate mother had the grief of seeing her little girl, then about six years old, lying on the bed, which she knew must be the bed of death. Gentle and patient was the little sufferer: she knew she was going to leave her father and mother, but she said she was not sorry, ‘she was going to the *good man*.’ Poor child! her experience of

life, short as it had been, was a bitter one.

“One cold morning, her father was gone to work, her mother was sitting by her bed-side with the baby, and her elder brother was going to school, where he was sent by a friend of his mother’s; he had just left the room, when little Annie was seized with convulsions, which the watchful parent knew would soon be followed by her release from her sufferings. She ran to the door and called the boy, crying to him, ‘Come back, come back, here is the school for you to go to!’ and alone in that half-furnished garret, the mother watched the gradual fading of her child’s life. As she told me afterwards, she shed no tear, nor has she done so since.”

“Was she not sorry to lose her little girl, cousin Edward?” asked Agnes.

“Her sorrow was so great that she *could*

not weep. You have never felt more than very slight sorrows, Agnes, as yet, and your tears are ready to flow either for yourself or other people ; but when bitter griefs come one after another, the heart feels so much oppressed that no tears come to relieve it."

"Crying *does* make one better, I know," said little Emily ; "for sometimes, when I have been very angry, I have felt quite poorly, till somebody said something rather kind to me, and then I began to cry directly, and got better."

"Now tell us some more about Annie's poor mother, and how they got on,—did the baby live?"

"Yes, Agnes, the baby lived, but owing to the same cause that took his sister away, want of food, on his recovery from an illness he became deformed. He now walks with great difficulty, his breathing is very pain-

ful, and his head, which seems too large for his body, lies sunk, as it were, between his shoulders. His mind is a very active one, however, but I fear that his frail body will not be strong enough to bear the roughness of this hard-working world. He is now about ten years old, and has three younger brothers, but no little girl has come to supply Annie's place."

"And what," asked Miss Horton, "became of the eldest boy?"

"He is a healthy lad, owing, probably, to his having had good food during the first few years of his life, and is now at work in one of the large manufactories in their neighbourhood. The family, owing to this and the father having regular employment, are now rather better off, but it is very uphill work after having been so very poor."

"But, cousin Edward," said Agnes, "you said that Aunt Jane would teach me all

about the region of the very poor of which you say I know so little, but you know we are come to live in the country, and they are not so miserable here ; ought I to wish to go back into the great, dirty, busy town that I might try to do some good to these poor creatures !”

“The man, my dear Agnes, aye, or the child, who really wishes to do good, need never seek to change his mode or place of residence to find the opportunity. It is true, that in this small village there is comparatively little distress, but you have no idea of the ignorance amongst the poor in the country.”

“But there is the village school, and most of the children go there.”

“It is not merely going to school, nor even learning all the lessons taught there, that will cure the ignorance that prevails. The master and mistress were very likely

former pupils in the same school,—do you know, Miss Horton,” he added turning to her, “how the village school is managed?”

“Very indifferently, I fear,” was her reply. “I heard Miss Mitchell speaking of it the other day. It is one of those old-endowed schools which go on almost sleeping from year to year, and as long as the children attend pretty regularly and sit quietly in church, the trustees do not trouble themselves about what they learn.”

“I wonder,” Agnes began, and then stopping, said hesitatingly, “but I suppose I have no right to wonder—it must be all proper.”

But she did not look satisfied, and Miss Horton said to her,

“If the wonder is still there, would it not be well to see if it can be satisfied, unless it is a mere idle wonder that it can do no good to have cleared up.”

“Well, if it is not impertinent, I was going

to say that I wondered that Aunt Jane, who seems so fond of being useful, does not go to that school and try to make it better."

"I am not sorry," said Edward, "that you expressed your surprise, for it gives me an opportunity of shewing you an instance of what I said about the opportunities of doing good being always within our reach. Can you not think of any duty that would prevent your aunt attending to that school?"

"Oh, poor dear grandmamma!" exclaimed Agnes, "I quite forgot her; to be sure, it would not do at all for Aunt Jane to be much away from her, and I am sure it was very unjust in me to think she might do more, for all the time she has to spare from grandmamma, she is doing some good. You know, Cousin Edward, that she has a few girls at the farm to teach; and I dare say she has them there instead of going to them, that she may be ready if she is wanted at home."

“Most likely ; and now you see that your Aunt Jane has her duties quite at hand ; she has no need to search for them, and she cheerfully performs them though they are what some of the noisy *duty-seekers*, or, as they might be called, *excitement-seekers*, would consider very humble and uninteresting.”

“But you do not mean that we are not to *seek out* for duties to be done ?” said Agnes.

“Far from it, my dear child, but we are never to leave near duties neglected whilst we are looking for far-off ones. The daughter who neglects her parents in order to distribute tracts, or the mother who leaves her children untaught for the sake of attending missionary meetings, may be admired by the thoughtless, as active useful members of society, but they are not performing their highest duties. There are many who have not these demands upon them who are, or should be, ready for the many deeds of active

...and when he would with his poor, ...
...to the willing ...

...Edward had ...
...with ...
...staring ...

...and I heard ...
...he ...

"...too,"
...said Ellen.

"To be sure I can say he would go home
with Aunt Jane, and listen—there he is back
again," and she ran to meet her father at the
door.

Thus passed most of the days of the
...in the country
to an end, ...
hands ... first
... their ...

employments, in which they were joined by little Emily, whom Mr. Mitchell took entirely under his protection, for as he said he could not do without Miss Horton till his children were older, and Emily could not do without her aunt, so they were both obliged to stay.

The child's naturally good dispositions soon began to show themselves through the faults with which a bad education had clouded them, and under her aunt's gentle influence she became a pleasant friend and companion for the children of her benefactor.

By the time the summer came round again Mr. Mitchell looked back with great satisfaction to his removal into the country. He was quite satisfied with the progress that Caroline had made during these few months in the most important part of her education, the improvement of her temper and disposition. She was so young, that once removed from the influence of her thoughtless com-

panions, she soon became more like those with whom she constantly lived.

When Agnes was about fourteen old Mrs. Mitchell died, and Aunt Jane came to live at Oaklands. Not long after, Miss Horton married our friend Edward Constable, and as he had country tastes like her own, they settled at Beechwood Farm, where Emily lived with them, so that, as Agnes said, the cottage did not go out of the family.

Charles Maltby was amply rewarded for all his care of little Mary. She grew up a strong healthy girl, and repaid his kindness, by the most devoted attachment. During two long illnesses she nursed him night and day, and when he left home to study farming on a larger scale than he could do at home, Mary was as attentive to old Mr. Maltby as if she had been his own child.

Mary Newton's happiness, during the remaining six years of her life was very much

increased by the residence of the Mitchells so near to her. Agnes was her very frequent visitor, and she often said afterwards, that if she added a little to poor Mary's happiness, she was sure Mary had added much to hers by many a lesson of patience and cheerfulness in severe suffering ; and she often thought with gratitude of the time when she first, as a child, felt in that humble home, the influence of the moral beauty of goodness.

THE END.

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